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UNDERSTANDING UNIVERSITY STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF ORGANIZATIONS USING FACEBOOK PAGES

For the degree of   Master of Science

Is approved by the final examining committee:

Mihaela Vorvoreanu
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Chair
Timothy Peoples

James Eric Dietz

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Approved by Major Professor(s):   Mihaela Vorvoreanu

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Head of the Departmental Graduate Program   Date

UNDERSTANDING UNIVERSITY STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF

ORGANIZATIONS USING FACEBOOK PAGES

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty

of

Purdue University

by

Joshua L. Sarver

In Partial Fulfillment of the

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West Lafayette, Indiana

For Kelsie, who is a constant inspiration.

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ABSTRACT

Sarver, Joshua L. MS, Purdue University, December 2015. Understanding University Student Perceptions of Organizations Using Facebook Pages. Major Professor: Mihaela Vorvoreanu.

This study examines how the interface elements of organizational Facebook pages affect student perceptions of core organization-public relationship dimensions. Organizations are increasingly using Facebook as a platform for building and maintaining relationships with their publics. University students are a major user group on Facebook, which makes understanding their experiences on the platform vital. This study provides a review of the relevant literature regarding social media, organization-public relationship building and management, and user experience in order to build a case for the necessity of this study. 15 students were interviewed while visiting an organization's Facebook page using an adapted form of a research protocol called website experience analysis. The results of the study explain the ways in which university students experience Facebook pages and the interface elements that influence perception of trust, commitment, involvement, openness, and dialogue. This research examined the flexibility and utility of the website experience analysis protocol for studying experiences on Facebook pages.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of this proposed research project. The introduction outlines the scope of the research, the significance of the proposed study, important definitions necessary for understanding this paper, as well as the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the research.

1.1   Statement of the Problem

Social media is an incredibly powerful and popular tool for organizations hoping to connect and engage with key audiences. Facebook, the most popular social media in the United States, attracts 864 million active daily users (1.35 billion monthly), and 703 million mobile active daily users (1.12 billion monthly) on average as of September 2014 (Facebook Newsroom, 2014). According to Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg, the average American spends about 40 minutes per day on Facebook. Furthermore, Facebook commands a dominant 17% of the total 162 minutes that Americans spend on their smartphone devices per day (Soper, 2014). These statistics explain why businesses and organizations are clamoring to have a presence on Facebook. The social media analytics firm Simply Measured reports that 80% of Fortune 500 companies are active on Facebook. In June 2014, Facebook reported that there were more than 30 million small businesses with active pages. With so many eyes constantly on Facebook, organizations

need to understand how to effectively use the platform to engage with users and how those users perceive the organization.

The purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding of the user experience of university students visiting organizational pages on Facebook by implementing an adapted form of a research protocol titled website experience analysis proposed by Vorvoreanu (2008) combined with user experience interviews. The researcher will analyze how student users experience organizational Facebook pages, their perceptions of individual page elements, and how their perceptions of organizations are affected by these experiences. This study has potential implications not only for how organizations can better utilize Facebook's page platform to foster better relationships with their audiences, but could also have design implications for Facebook pages in order to better serve both users and organizations. For the purpose of this study, a public relations perspective is adopted in order to understand and evaluate pages through the lens of organization-public relationship building and maintenance. This study also provides the opportunity to explore the flexibility and utility of website experience analysis research protocol for understanding the experiences of students visiting organizations' Facebook pages. This protocol has previously been used to understand more traditional public relations websites, but has potential to be very useful for researching other websites and platforms such as social media.

1.2   Scope

This research study seeks to examine university student experiences and perceptions of organizational Facebook pages as they relate to relationship building and management. To narrow the scope of this research, a number of research design choices

were made. The choices of which group of individuals to observe, the social network site to examine, the types of pages to use, and the theoretical framework to approach this study from have all been carefully considered and are explained in this section.

First, the choice of university students as the main participants for this study is not only convenient, as this research will be conducted at a large Midwestern university, but also reflective of Facebook's primary user demographic. According to the Pew Research Center (2014), 89% of individuals ages 18-29 who have access to the Internet are using social media. Of those individuals, 73-78% are likely to have at least some college education. Because these individuals make up the largest user group for Facebook, it is increasingly important and potentially profitable for Facebook and their stakeholders, including organizations on Facebook, to understand university student experiences, perceptions, and the relationships they are building with this group. Furthermore, university students are likely to be active, experienced users of Facebook, making them good candidates for this research. This group of individuals could also be potentially influential for sharing information about organizations online via social media and other means, as well as in-person. Because this is a qualitative study, generalizability is not the end goal. However, interviewing 15 university students should provide a deep, rich understanding of how a particular group of individuals experiences organizational Facebook pages and the interface elements that affect the perceptions of organization-public relationship dimensions.

Second, the choice to examine organizations on Facebook rather than one of the many other available social network sites such as Twitter or Google+ is a reflection of the popularity of the site and the societal impact that it has had. Also, Facebook has a

modularized page system for organizations to input their own content, text, images, and other information. This is important for the scope of this study, as it relates to analyzing the individual interface elements of Facebook pages and how they affect student perceptions of core organization-public relationship factors. Individual interface elements refer to the text, graphics, audio, or video elements on a page. Combined, these elements create modules that can serve as content, navigation, graphic layout, and dialogue functions (Vorvoreanu, 2008). Facebook pages are composed of the "Profile Picture," "Cover Photo," "About" section, "Like Counter, "Like Button," "Reviews" "Message Button" and other elements at the top of the page such as customizable navigation buttons for different functions. Below that are "Status Updates" on the "Timeline," "Photos," "Videos," "Apps," "Visitor Posts," and "Liked By This Page" sections. "Status Update" posted to the page's "Timeline" can include descriptive text, headlines, snippet text, hyperlinks, videos, photos, thumbnail images, graphics, timestamps, as well as the amount of "Likes," buttons for "Like," "Comment," and "Share," and a section for comments. On the right side of Facebook pages is a history section showing all of the years that an organization's page has existed. All of these individual elements can be combined in different configurations to create modules with different functions. This is described in more detail in the literature review section. The proposed study will examine which of these elements are important to university students during certain phases of visiting a Facebook page. Website experience analysis as a research protocol should be particularly well suited for this type of platform, but the utility and flexibility of the method will be revealed in the results of the study. This study is limited to organizational

use of Facebook, but some of the findings might have implications for other similar social network sites and the organizations using them to reach their publics.

Third, the researcher has chosen to examine only the Facebook pages of organizations, rather than other types of Facebook pages such as "fan" pages or celebrity pages. The Facebook Help Center page states that Facebook Pages "are for businesses, brands, and organizations to share their stories and connect with people" (Facebook Help Center, 2015). It was determined previously in a pilot study that participants should be able to choose any type of organization so that the differences across participants and organizations can be examined and compared. This research design decision is also related to the adoption of a public relations framework for this study. The researcher will be examining organizational Facebook pages and student perceptions of them through the lens of organization-public relationship building and maintenance. The organization-public relationship dimensions of trust, commitment, involvement, openness, and dialogue were chosen as the primary dimensions of interest because of their use in previous studies using website experience analysis and their prevalence organization-public relationship building literature. For organizations, Facebook pages are an outward-facing platform for bi-directional communication and dialogue between the organization and their audiences. An organization's Facebook page becomes the "face" and "voice" of that organization, making all communication flowing to and from the page an official representation of that organization. While organizations are able to directly control some of the elements of their page on Facebook, such as the posts they create and the photos and graphics they use, there are also portions of the page that are outside of their control that might affect the perceptions of their audiences. User comments and discussions on a

page or post of an organization that are made publicly visible, for example, might influence perceptions. The effects that these interface elements have on student experiences and perceptions of organization-public relationships are the primary focus of this study.

1.3   Significance

In the past decade, social media has become a nearly ubiquitous part of everyday life. There are a multitude of social media sites on the Internet today, but none have been able to match the overwhelming popularity of Facebook. According to Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg, the average American spends about 40 minutes per day on Facebook (Facebook Newsroom, 2015). This makes Facebook an incredibly useful and powerful tool for organizations hoping to engage with the vast number of active users. The proposed study provides a better understanding of the user experience of university students visiting organizational pages on Facebook by implementing an adapted form of website experience analysis (WEA) proposed by Vorvoreanu (2008) combined with user experience interviews. As a research protocol, website experience analysis shows great potential for understanding the elements of social network sites as they relate to organization-public relationship building. WEA has previously been used to examine online relationship building through organizational websites, but this study will provide the opportunity to understand the potential for using the protocol for Facebook pages. Furthermore, this study borrows from the realms of public relations and user experience, adopting and combining elements of each to explore how they are interrelated. Much of the previous research examining organizational uses of social media primarily focus on

the types of content that organizations are presenting to their audiences. This study

approaches organizational social media use from the user's perspective, which could be a

valuable addition to the current body of research.

<div align="center">1.4   Research Question</div>

The research question for this study is: How do the interface elements of

organizational Facebook pages affect student perceptions of core organization-public

relationship dimensions? This study may have implications for organizations engaging

with users through Facebook pages, but also for Facebook's design. This study also

examines the potential of website experience analysis for understanding experiences on

Facebook pages.

<div align="center">1.5   Definitions</div>

Facebook organizational page – Facebook opened up its service to companies,

organizations, and brands in 2007, allowing these entities to create and customize

branded pages for Facebook users to follow and receive updates from. These

pages contain elements and modules such as a "Profile Picture," "Cover Photo,"

"Status Update," Timeline," "Like Counter," photo gallery, "Visitor Posts" and

"About" sections, and more.

Interface elements – Parts of a website such as text, graphics, audio, and video.

Vorvoreanu (2008) argues that elements can have symbolic, command,

organizational, and metacommunication functions.

Modules - the combined elements of a website create modules which can have different

functions, such as navigation, content, graphic layout, and dialogue. Modules are

combined to create an experience for a user (Vorvoreanu, 2008, p. 63).

Social network sites - Boyd and Ellison (2007), two prolific social media scholars, define

social network sites as web-based services that allow users to do three things: "(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, 2007, p. 211).

Uses and gratifications theory - a theoretical framework used to describe how different

individuals use technology to achieve different goals (Katz, Blumler, &

Gurevitch, 1973).

Website experience analysis (WEA) – a research protocol used primarily for examining

organization-public relationship building on online organizational websites. This

method examines the experience of websites from the user's perspective, rather

than from an organizational perspective. The purpose of website experience

analysis is to understand how relationships are built between an organization and

a certain public via websites and helps to answer the question "what website

elements play major roles at what points during the website visit?" (Vorvoreanu,

2008, p. 59). This protocol breaks down the process of visiting a webpage into

phases.

<div align="center">1.6   Assumptions</div>

The following assumptions are inherent in the proposed study:

1. There is a need to understand student perceptions of organizations using Facebook

   pages from the perspective of the user, as much of the previous research has focused

on examining the content and outbound messages from organizations. It is important to understand this issue because of the shift toward dialogue and interaction between organizations and their audiences through social media.

2. Participants will respond as accurately and honestly as possible about their perceptions and experiences of organizations using Facebook pages.

3. Participants will be able to sufficiently explain and provide examples of the Facebook interface elements that have influenced their perceptions and experience of organizations as evidence of their responses to interview questions.

4. The number of participants interviewed for this study will be sufficient for understanding the phenomena qualitatively. In this type of study, it is typical to perform data collection until data saturation, or no new data is emerging from interviews.

5. Participants will have little-to-no prior experience with the organizations they choose to examine for the interview. This is done purposefully, so that participants do not have pre-conceived opinions of the organizations.

6. Participants will be able to complete the interview in its entirety.

1.7   Limitations

The following limitations are inherent in the proposed study:

1. This study is limited by the time period of one semester to collect data, analyze the data, and produce results.

2. This study is limited to students from Purdue University's campus in West Lafayette, Indiana.

3. This study is limited to fifteen student participants due to the restrictions of time and resources available. However, fifteen participants should be enough to reach data saturation according to similar previous research and suggested guidelines.

4. This study is limited by the students' cooperation and willingness to answer interview questions thoroughly and honestly while providing examples of interface elements as evidence of their responses.

5. This study is limited to the Facebook pages for organizations that student participants choose. Organizational pages will not be suggested to students to prevent the influence of the researcher over the selection of pages.

6. This study is limited by the researcher's experience and ability to conduct guided user experience interviews and perform thematic analysis on the collected data.

1.8 Delimitations

The following delimitations are inherent in the proposed study:

1. This study will be undertaken for the period of one semester for conducting data collection and data analysis.

2. This study is limited to students that have active Facebook accounts.

3. This study is limited to the organization-public relationship dimensions of trust, commitment, involvement, openness, and dialogue.

4. Though interview participants are required to provide interface elements of organizational Facebook pages, the content of these pages will not be examined using content analysis.

5. This study will not examine other social media platforms.

6. This study will not examine personal profiles on Facebook.

1.9　Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to outline the proposed research project in terms of the scope, the significance of the study, important definitions, as well as the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations. The next section will provide a review of the relevant literature about social media, Facebook, relationship building and management, and user experience.

CHAPTER 2.   LITERATURE REVIEW

The following is a review of the current literature regarding the study of social media including Facebook and its uses, user experiences on websites and social media, and the public relations perspective of relationship management and dialogic theory. Organizations are increasingly using Facebook as a platform for building and maintaining relationships with their publics. As social media sites like Facebook have evolved and become a nearly ubiquitous part of everyday life for many individuals, it has become vital to study and examine their impact. Understanding the user experience of university students, a major user group on Facebook, could have implications for the way that organizations use the platform to build and maintain relationships with their publics, as well as how Facebook pages are designed to facilitate this process. Facebook provides a platform with a modularized interface that allows organizations to populate their pages with "Status Updates," images, videos, discussion, and more. The following review of literature provides insight into the approach this study will use to understand how these interface elements and modules affect student perceptions of core organization-public relationship factors.

2.1   Social Media, Facebook, Definitions, and Uses

This section defines social media and reviews the different ways that social media have been examined in the current literature. Primarily, scholars have examined the uses of social media and reasons for using social media. Also, research has looked at social behavior, interactions, and influence on social media. These concepts and frameworks lay the foundation for approaching this current study.

Researchers and scholars from various fields have examined social media, often referred to as social network sites (SNS), in their many different variations in order to understand their impact on society, culture, and the individuals using them. Boyd and Ellison (2007), two prolific social media scholars, define social network sites as web-based services that allow users to do three things: "(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, 2007, p. 211). They also suggest that the primary elements of SNSs are visible profiles displaying a list of "friends" who are also on the site. Others have proposed a framework for understanding social media by defining it as a platform combining seven fundamental building blocks: "identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups" (Kietzmann, Hermkens, & McCarthy, 2011, p. 245). Vorvoreanu & Clark (2010) assert that social media have characteristics of both mass communication as well as interpersonal communication, depending on the privacy settings of the individual user. Exchanges between users that are interpersonal in nature become public and therefore open to interpretation from others. Similarly, communication between organizations and users of Facebook become artifacts for others

to view and interpret. This is an important consideration to keep in mind, as this study will take into account the public exchanges between organizations and Facebook users as interface elements of Facebook pages.

Since the first SNS, SixDegrees.com, launched in 1997, SNS have varied widely in their handling of different implementations of features such as user profile generation, content creation, user connections and networking, public versus private profile visibility and many more (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Gilbert & Karahalios, 2009; Tufekci, 2007). The uses of SNS have also changed and evolved. Individual users and communities can network, gain social capital, create content, share, discuss, organize, protest, shop, find jobs, date, and interact in ways previously unobserved (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Ellison, Steinfeld, & Lampe, 2007; Gil de Zúñiga, Jung, & Valenzuela, 2012; Gonzalez-Bailon, Borge-Holthoefer, Rivero, & Moreno, 2011). This new way of interacting applies not only to relationships between individuals, but also to the relationships between individuals and organizations sharing the same platform. These interactions play an important role in the overall user experience, and ultimately are the building blocks of SNS. Also, the research shows that social media, their uses, and features have all evolved and changed over time to match and drive user expectations.

Research by Smock, Ellison, Lampe, and Wohn (2011) used a uses and gratifications approach to study SNSs as a collection of features. Uses and gratifications is a theoretical framework used to describe how different individuals use technology, in this case social media, to achieve different goals (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973). They surveyed students to reveal that motivations for using Facebook were good predictors of student preferences toward certain features. Other research shows that

student motivations for using social media and perceptions of social media differ

significantly from that of educators (Roblyer, et al., 2010). This provides evidence that

different elements of Facebook pages can be perceived in different ways, depending on

the underlying motivations of the user. Research by these scholars suggests that SNS,

specifically Facebook, can be examined as a collection of features and that the uses and

gratifications framework is valuable in breaking down the individual elements of a

platform. This is helpful in providing a framework for understanding how the interface

elements of SNS can affect the overall user experience.

Research concerning the reasons for using social media along with other research

on social influence in network communities provides evidence that group norms and

interactions through sharing, discussing, chatting, and commenting have an impact on

user experiences and perceptions (Cheung, Chiu, & Lee, 2011; Dholakia, Bagozzi, &

Pearo, 2004). Cheung, Chiu, and Lee (2011) examined university student reasons for

using Facebook in terms of joint action, collective behavior, social influence, uses and

gratifications, and social presence. They found that student motivation to use Facebook

was significantly associated with other users' usage and social presence on the platform

(Cheung, Chiu, & Lee, 2011). Research on herding behavior online also provides

evidence that people are influenced by others' behaviors, opinions, and expressed

attitudes when making decisions (Huang & Chen, 2006). This examination of online

social behavior has important implications for the current study the researcher is

conducting about student perceptions of organizations, as students might be influenced by

content produced by others. Comments and discussions from other users appearing on an

organizational Facebook page may directly influence the user's perception of the page

and the organization itself either positively or negatively. These factors could have a

significant impact on an organization's ability to build and maintain relationships with

users visiting their Facebook page. The next section will discuss some of the relevant

research regarding public relations, relationship management, dialogue, and social media.

2.2   Public Relations as Relationship Management and Dialogue

Much of the research about Facebook has focused on connections and interactions

between individuals. Recently, however, in the fields of public relations and marketing

there has been significant amount of research examining how organizations are using

Facebook and other social media to build and maintain relationships with their publics.

Scholars agree that the purpose of public relations is to build, maintain, and promote

mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics (Grunig, 2013;

Ki & Hon, 2007; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998; Oliver, 2009; Vorvoreanu, 2008). This

section will discuss literature regarding practices and approaches to public relations,

dimensions of organization-public relationships, and will explain some of the rationale of

choosing to examine perceptions of dimensions of trust, commitment, involvement,

openness, and dialogue.

Building upon relationship management in public relations, the dialogic theory of

public relations proposed, described, and clarified by Kent and Taylor (2002) asserts that

public relations approaches have shifted toward using dialogue to build and maintain

relationships that serve organizational as well as public interests (Kent & Taylor, 2002).

A dialogic approach to public relations assumes that dialogue involves elements of

mutuality, collaboration, a spirit of mutual equality, propinquity (relational orientation),

immediacy of presence, temporal flow, engagement, empathy, supportiveness, communal orientation, confirmation, risk, vulnerability, commitment, and genuineness (Kent & Taylor, 2002).

Kent and Taylor (1998) suggested that a dialogic approach to public relations on the Web is well-suited for establishing and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships that focus on symmetrical communication, the exchange of opinions and ideas, and engagement. Central to a dialogic approach to public relations is the concept of feedback, or receiving information back from the publics and responding to their concerns (Kent & Taylor, 1998). Furthermore, Kent and Taylor suggest that organizations should strive to provide information to their publics that is actually useful and offers value. Eventually, the publics might come to rely on the organization's website for useful information. Also, the researchers suggest that sites should seek to operate as more than "propaganda, marketing, or advertising tools," and strive toward creating "lasting, genuine, and valuable relationships with its publics" (Kent & Taylor, 1998, p. 330). While many of the principles of dialogic communication on the Web referred to organizational websites at the time of Kent and Taylor's research, the concepts are still applicable to organizations using social media platforms. Many social media platforms, including Facebook, are centered around dialogue and have built-in, primary dialogue features. Waters, Canfield, Foster, and Hardy (2011) examined how dialogic principles of communication were applied by university health centers using Facebook pages to engage in dialogue with their publics. Similarly, researchers examined how the American Red Cross engaged in two-way dialogue with their publics via Facebook and Twitter (Briones, Kuch, Liu, & Jin, 2011). An organization's presence on Facebook establishes them as part of a

community and necessitates interaction and response to feedback from their visitors and publics; hence the term "social" media. It is also in the best interest of organizations to provide useful information to those that follow them, as this content will often appear on a user's personalized "News Feed" or "Timeline," depending on the interface. The elements of dialogic communication are directly related to the organization-public relationship dimensions being examined for this study, as Facebook pages allow for comments, reviews, and discussion between page visitors and the organizations themselves. Dialogue is one of the primary public relations dimensions examined in the proposed study.

Researchers suggest that relationships can be studied by examining the perceptions of the individuals involved in those relationships. Broom, Casey, and Ritchey (1997) sought to define and clarify the concept of relationships between organizations and their publics. They argue that while most public relations practitioners agree that the purpose of public relations is to establish, foster, grow, and maintain mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics, few relationships are actually measured (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997). In summarizing the literature at the time, Broom, Casey, and Ritchey asserted "interpersonal communications scholars operationally define relationships as measures of participants' perceptions or as a function of those perceptions" (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997, p. 89). While building and maintaining relationships may be the focus of public relations efforts, the actual long-term value of these relationships is dependent on a number of factors.

In order to cultivate and grow useful relationships with their publics on social media, certain core organization-public relationship dimensions must exist. More

recently, Grunig (2011) argued that short-term public relations efforts only have value if they lead to long-term relationships between organizations and their publics. This makes it vital for organizations to cultivate positive relationships with their publics in terms of "trust, mutuality of control, satisfaction, and commitment," all of which are factors of quality long-term relationships (Grunig, 2011, p. 25). Grunig also provides disclosure and openness, or the extent to which organizations and their publics are willing to share information, concerns, thoughts, and feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with one another, as an example of a "symmetrical cultivation strategy" for establishing relationships (Grunig, 2011, p. 25). Bruning and Ledingham (1998) suggest that the key organization-public relationship dimensions in predicting consumer behavior are "the organization's willingness to be open when communicating with the public, the level at which the consumer trusts that the organization will do what it says it will do, the organization's level of involvement in the communities it serves, the organization's financial investment in the communities it serves, and finally the organization's long-term commitment to the communities it serves" (Bruning & Ledingham, 1998, pg. 199). Respectively, these are the dimensions of openness, trust, involvement, investment, and commitment. Ledingham and Bruning's research suggests that these dimensions affect the ways that organization-public relationships are started, developed, and maintained. These factors of relationships are taken into careful consideration for the researcher's current study of student perceptions of organizations on Facebook. The proposed study is focused on the dimensions of trust, commitment, involvement, openness, and dialogue, as previous research has determined to be influential in terms of organization-public

relationship building and maintenance. Furthermore, Vorvoreanu (2008) used these dimensions in examining how relationships are built via corporate websites.

The following paragraph summarizes the organization-public relationship dimensions chosen for the proposed study, as described by Ledingham (2003) and implemented previously by Vorvoreanu (2008). Ledingham (2003) states that trust, from a public's perspective, relates to an organization "doing what it says it will do" (Ledingham, 2003, pg. 185). Commitment is "the organization being committed to the welfare of the community" or the decision to maintain a relationship with a public. Involvement is "the organization being involved in the welfare of the community" or the time, energy, and resources an organization is willing to give to build a relationship. Openness is viewed as "sharing the organization's plans for the future with public members" or sharing information generally (Ledingham, 2003, pg. 185). Finally, dialogue refers to the two-way back and forth communication between an organization and their publics (Kent & Taylor, 1998) or, in the case of Vorvoreanu's (2008) previous website experience analysis study, the organization's interest in listening to its publics.

This study uses the public relations approaches of relationship management and dialogic theory as a theoretical framework for understanding how relationships are built and perceived through social media. The next section reviews relevant research in public relations in an online context and the primary research protocol used in the proposed research.

2.3   Public Relations Online and on Social Media

Recently, a significant portion of public relations research has focused on organizational uses of social media. However, much of this research has been approached from the perspective of the organization itself and often comes in the form of content analysis. This section reveals the wide variety of research that has been performed regarding organizations using social media while highlighting the need for research that approaches this subject from the user's perspective.

McCorkindale (2010) performed content analysis on the 2008 Fortune 50 companies' Facebook pages in order to analyze how they were leveraging the platform in terms of relationship maintenance, information dissemination, and engagement. The researchers examined how many "fans" or "Likes" an organization had, what "About" information was included, how photos, videos, and discussion boards were used, and whether the organization was generating feedback on the page. McCorkindale found that the majority of organizations failed to utilize Facebook pages to their fullest potential for public relations purposes, especially in the realm of corporate social responsibility, or "a business organization's configuration of principles of social responsibility, processes of social responsiveness, and policies, programs, and observable outcomes as they relate to the firm's societal relationships" (Cochran & Wood, 1984; McCorkindale, 2010, p. 693). McCorkindale's study is a good example of how different elements and content of an organizational page can be presented, or lacking. However, little is done to understand how actual users and visitors perceive the content generated by the organization or by other users.

The ability of organizations to fulfill their public relations goals on social media has been the object of examination in previous research. Haigh, Brubaker, and Whiteside (2013) examined how for-profit organizations use Facebook to disclose and disseminate information as well as promote social responsibility activities and two-way communication with stakeholders. They examined organizational use of Facebook pages, the overall attitudes of students toward the organization, as well as their satisfaction, trust, commitment, perception of corporate social responsibility, and purchase intent. The researchers found that interacting with an organization's Facebook page could bolster student perceptions and attitude of that organization (Haigh, Brubaker, & Whiteside, 2013). Furthermore, Taylor, Lewin, and Strutton (2011) found that advertising on Facebook was perceived positively when it offered entertainment or informational value, which is in line with Smock, Ellison, Lampe, and Wohn (2011) uses and gratification research with social media. They also found that advertising that was experienced as exploitation led to negative perceptions. These studies provide examples of how organizational Facebook pages can be examined as tools for public relations and advertising. It also legitimizes the need for more research on the perceptions of organizations using Facebook.

Other studies have analyzed certain types of organizations using websites and social media as platforms for relationship building in the context of environmental advocacy groups (Bortree, & Seltzer, 2009), nonprofit organizational activity (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas, 2009), online social learning environments (Kreijns, Kirschner, & Jochems, 2002), emergency management on social media (Bukhari, Wojtalewicz, Vorvoreanu, & Dietz, 2012), and many other contexts.

This study is based primarily around the work of Vorvoreanu (2008, 2009), which was one of the first empirical research studies to attempt to understand organization-public relationship building and management on Facebook. Vorvoreanu conducted focus groups with students to examine and understand their perceptions of organizations on Facebook. The study found that students felt sad, upset, or annoyed about organizations being allowed on Facebook, as it was viewed primarily as a personal "digital hangout," leaving little or no room for building relationships with large organizations and brands. Furthermore, students perceived organizations as "trying to be cool" by being on Facebook. Students did not feel as though they could trust organizations more because they were on Facebook (Vorvoreanu, 2009). Vorvoreanu's study paves the way for the current research study both theoretically and practically by providing a basis for understanding student perceptions of organizations on Facebook. However, at the time of the study in 2009, organizational pages on Facebook were fairly new and disruptive. Previously, Facebook had been an environment exclusively for students to create posts, upload photos, interact, and engage with one another. Currently, users of Facebook have had nearly seven years to adjust to the presence of organizations on Facebook. This study provides an opportunity to understand how perceptions may have changed over time.

While adopting a relationship-building perspective, this study also seeks to understand the impact of Facebook organizational page design and modularized elements of Facebook pages. The following section reviews the theoretical frameworks and methodology borrowed from the fields of user experience and usability, as well as some previous related work.

2.4   User Experience, Affordances, and Elements of Web Pages

User experience research examines how users perceive, think about, navigate, and use products. This section outlines the core user experience concepts adopted for the purpose of this study. The ability to break down and examine individual interface elements and their impact on users, the different ways that users perceive interface elements, and the ways in which human browse the web are all central to this study.

The definition of user experience (UX) is an elusive one, despite the popularity of UX methods and the field of UX design. Many of the fundamental practices and concepts in UX stem from the work of Nielsen and Norman. Norman's work in user-centered (human-centered) design (Norman, 1986) and his writing on emotional design (Norman, 2004) and the psychology of the design of "everyday things" (Norman, 2002) define and discuss many of the concepts for UX, such as mental models, affordances, human factors, and more. Nielsen's work in usability and its impact on the overall user experience, usability inspection methods, as well as his development of design heuristics have been influential in the field of UX (Nielsen, 1999).

A significant portion of research has been performed using website experiences, content, and elements as units of analysis. Studies have looked at websites and drivers of online trust (Bart, Shankar, Sultan, & Urban, 2005), impression management online (Lindgaard, Fernandes, Dudek, & Brown, 2006), global corporate websites (Robbins & Stylianou, 2003) and more. These studies are great examples of how to examine the content of websites as they relate to perceptions, but their scope does not include social media. There are a few examples of breaking down the elements, structure, and content of social media platforms, like an exploration of "the Facebook experience" (Hart,

Ridley, Taher, Sas, & Dix, 2008), Facebook's technological affordances and their affect

on perceptions of time (Kaun & Stiernstedt, 2014), and Facebook profile elements as

signals of familiarity and the effects on trust and impression generation (Lampe, Ellison,

& Steinfeld, 2007). These studies are particularly useful for illustrating how the current

study of student perceptions of organizations on Facebook might illuminate how certain

elements and modules on organizational Facebook pages have an impact on the overall

user experience and the effect on relationship building and management. Furthermore,

they reinforce that interface elements can, in fact, have an effect on user perceptions and

that it is possible to break down the experience of visiting a website based on interface

elements.

  As mentioned previously, trust is an important factor of relationship building and

an integral part of a user's experience with a website or interface. Wang and Emurian

(2005) examined how elements of online commerce websites influenced consumer trust

and how trust is built through web interface design. The researchers argue that online

trust shares many of the same characteristics of offline trust, in that they both involve two

parties, a trustor and trustee, some degree of vulnerability, an expected action from at

least one of the parties, and a varying level of required trust depending on the individual

and their attitudes (Wang & Emurian, 2005). Wang and Emurian build upon Egger

(2001) who places and emphasis on the four elements of "pre-interactional filters taking

place before any online interaction, the interface properties of the website, the

information content of the web site, and relationship management" (Egger, 2001, p. 6).

Wang and Emurian also rely on a model presented in a report they refer to as the

Cheskin/Sapient Report (1999) which establishes the six building blocks of online trust in

website interfaces are "seals of approval, brand, navigation, fulfillment, presentation, and technology" (Wang & Emurian, 2005, p. 113). The researchers assert that trust can be induced and maintained in an online environment through the purposeful use of web interface design that takes into consideration the perceptions of the customer, the usability of the site, and the use of professional graphics, photographs, and colors in confluence (Wang & Emurian, 2005). While these researchers studied trust in the environment of online commerce websites, many of the same principles and concepts can be applied to other websites, including social media. These studies show how the presence or lack of certain interface elements on webpages can have an affect on perceptions and feelings like trust.

The current study once again draws on the work of Vorvoreanu. Vorvoreanu (2008) proposed an experience-centered framework for understanding organization-public relationships as they are created and maintained through websites called website experience analysis. The purpose of website experience analysis is not to measure the relationship between an organization and a certain public, but rather to understand how those relationships are built (Vorvoreanu, 2008). Visiting a website, or Facebook page in the case of the proposed study, happens over time. As time unfolds, the user experiences the website and has perceptions, attitudes, cognitions, and behaviors toward the website. These factors of the user's experience are impacted by the different elements of a webpage. Website experience analysis helps to answer the question "What website elements play major roles at what points during the website visit?" (Vorvoreanu, 2008, p. 59). Vorvoreanu proposed the following definition of the website user experience: "The Web site user experience is the sequence of perceptions, cognitions, attitudes and

behaviors experienced by users in response to, and interaction with, the Web site's constitutive elements."

Interface elements, as Vorvoreanu suggests, are the building blocks of modules, and modules are the layers that constitute websites. Website modules include content, navigation, graphic layout, and dialogic modules. Elements include text, graphics, audio, and video. Website elements can have symbolic, command, organizational, or metacommuncation functions. Symbolic functions present positions or arguments, command functions call for interaction from the user, organizational functions deal with the graphic structure or organization of the website, and metacommunication functions deal with the nature of the relationship and interaction between the user and the website authors (Vorvoreanu, 2008). Furthermore, elements can belong to multiple different modules depending on the functions they serve. For example, a link can be viewed as part of the content and navigation module of a website, as can an image belong to content, navigational, and graphic layout modules. Elements, modules, their functions, and how they are perceived by the user make up the spatial portion of a user's experience with a website, and of the website experience analysis framework. As stated in the methodology section of this research paper, website experience analysis as a research protocol examines how individuals experience websites temporally in three phases: (1) first impression, (1) exploration, and (3) exit. The proposed research will examine if Facebook pages follow the same temporal structure. Website experience analysis has been used previously to analyze dimensions of trust, commitment, involvement, openness, and dialogue (Vorvoreanu, 2008). The structure of the website experience analysis questionnaire is based on the theory of prominence-interpretation, which asserts that

individuals assess credibility by first noticing an element on a site, then making a judgment or an evaluation of that element and the website overall (Fogg, 2003). This research protocol provides a method for understanding how homogenous publics experience websites from both a user experience and public relations perspective. The current study makes small adaptations to website experience analysis for the purposes of analyzing Facebook organizational pages.

In the proposed framework, Vorvoreanu (2008) draws on Lemke (2002) to explain how elements of a webpage, such as an image, text, or a link, could vary in the ways they are perceived by different users, resulting in different meanings. Lemke states that elements on the Web such as hypertexts afford new forms of complexity in terms of visual informational design. Meaning is created as a composite of both verbal and visual presentation on the Web. Furthermore, the researcher would add that the relationship and positioning of the elements of webpages to one another also have an affect on how they're interpreted. The elements of websites and how they are perceived are also subject to the factors of time and context. This is particularly salient in the study of social media content, as content changes constantly and can be generated by both organizations and other users. For example, an organization's reply to an individual's comment on a Facebook page might be perceived as dialogue as well as a symbolic indicator of trust.

Facebook provides organizations with customizable space to be filled with elements of the organization's choosing. The elements and modules of Facebook pages include "Profile Pictures," "Cover Photos," navigation links, "Like" and "Message" buttons, an "About" section to place text and hyperlinks, a "Like Counter," "Status Updates" on a "Timeline" to be filled with text, pictures, links, and thumbnail images,

and other elements, and more. On Facebook pages, the underlying elements and modules remain relatively unchanged in their organization, graphic layout, and navigation, but the content and dialogue such as the text, links, images, and comments vary amongst the different organizational pages. There are some minor customizations to the structure and order of how these different modules and elements appear on Facebook pages, such as the order of navigation links at the top of pages, and the order of "Apps," "Liked By This Page," and other sections on the left side of Facebook pages. Different organizations may make better or worse use of the elements and modules provided by Facebook's page design.

This study borrows theoretical frameworks and practical methods from the disciplines of public relations and user experience in the context of the online social media platform, Facebook, in order to gain a better understanding of student user experience and perceptions how of organizational pages on Facebook and to address the following question:

RQ: How do the interface elements of organizational Facebook pages affect student perceptions of core organizational-public relationship dimensions?

This study will also provide the opportunity to test the flexibility and utility of the website experience analysis protocol adapted for Facebook pages and to gauge whether it is an effective way of understanding student perceptions of organizations on Facebook pages.

The next chapter discusses the methodology for collecting and analyzing data, the data sources, the sampling strategy, and the researcher's perspective and bias.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

The following section outlines the data collection process, the data sources, the data analysis method, the sampling strategy, and describes the perspective of the researcher and potential sources of bias. Rationale is provided for the research design choices, as well as in-depth explanations of each choice.

3.1   Data Collection

To address the research questions, the researcher first acknowledges two theoretical perspectives that have shaped the research design. The first is a social constructionist theoretical framework. Gergen states that the social constructionist framework is primarily concerned with "the processes by which people come to describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world (including themselves) in which they live" (Gergen, 1986, pg. 266). From this perspective, reality is constructed and negotiated through social interaction. Meaning is socially created through the use of language, words, emotions, and feelings. This view of how humans understand the world is related to another framework that the researcher adopts, symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1986). Symbolic interactionism, as Blumer describes it, rests on the idea that humans act toward objects in ways that reflect the object's perceived meaning, where that meaning is created through social interaction. Furthermore, Blumer argues that the meanings of objects and things are dynamic, and change through the process of interaction (Blumer, 1986).

These two frameworks describe the researcher's view of how meaning and realities are created, and lay the foundation for this qualitative study. The qualitative nature of this study means that the results of the study are unlikely to be generalizable, but may offer a valuable understanding of this group of individuals' experiences through exploring the particularities of how they perceive organizations on Facebook.

Data was collected through observational interviews that made use of Vorvoreanu's (2008) website experience analysis research protocol adapted for social network sites, particularly Facebook. Sessions were video recorded with a laptop running usability software titled Silverback 2, which recorded the participant's face using the front-facing camera as well as the on-screen interactions. Participants were asked to choose and explore an organization's website that they were not familiar with while the researcher observed, asked questions, and took notes. As in the original methodology described by Vorvoreanu (2008), participant research sessions were conducted individually. In the proposed study, participants were asked to choose an organization's Facebook page to examine rather than being provided with a website, as was done previously. This research design choice was made to gain an understanding of how university students choose Facebook pages to explore. Another difference between the original version of website experience analysis and the method proposed in this study is that rather than administering the questionnaire via computer, questions were be asked directly by the researcher, who then recorded the responses. This was helpful because it allowed the researcher to ask for clarification and to probe for more detail. The questionnaire was structured so that participants gave a rating of their perception on a scale from 1-10, with 1 always being the negative response and 10 being the positive

response for each item, followed by providing examples of aspects of the page that influenced their rating. Another difference in the proposed methodology is the inclusion of "think aloud" protocol, which encourages the participant to verbally express their thoughts, feelings, likes, dislikes, and things they notice while exploring the interface (Nørgaard & Hornbæk, 2006; Van Someren, Barnard, & Sandberg, 1994). This is a commonly used technique in usability testing that allows the researcher more insight into what the participant is thinking during the session. These in-depth, semi-structured interviews were performed with 15 different student participants to examine their experience with Facebook organizational pages and the effects of interface elements on core organization-public relationship dimensions.

Prior to the interview, participants took a brief survey to collect demographic information such as their age, gender, university student status, major, years of experience with Facebook, amount of connections on Facebook, amount of pages the participant "Likes," estimated amount of time spent on Facebook daily/weekly, and their overall enjoyment of using Facebook rated on a scale from 1-10 with 1 being "I do not enjoy it" and 10 being "I enjoy it very much." Participants were also asked about their desktop and mobile usage of Facebook. This information was used to supplement the data collected during the actual interview, and is presented as descriptive statistics to provide a better understanding of the sample population. Quantitative measures for each question were used in analyzing the data in order to determine whether the participant felt positively or negatively about a certain question or dimension.

Participants used the researcher's laptop to log in to their own account for the purpose of the interview, and were required to use their own Facebook account throughout the entire session, so as to simulate a more natural experience with Facebook. Participants were directed to the "Like Pages" interface on Facebook to choose from a list of potential organizational pages suggested by Facebook. The exact details of Facebook's suggestion algorithms are not provided. Participants were instructed to choose a Facebook page for an organization that they were not previously familiar with. This was done in order to reduce the amount of previously formulated opinions or biases toward an organization which might have affected the processes of generating a first impression, familiarization, and making a final judgment about the organization and the page. It was determined in a pilot study that the researcher would not dictate the type of organization to be examined during the interview process. This is because the differences and similarities in participant responses to the interface elements of various organizational Facebook pages will be compared with one another in order to generate insights. For example, participants might have different expectations of a non-profit organization compared with a for-profit organization or a large compared with a small organization. There might also be significantly different expectations of a media organization versus a retail organization or a software organization. In the pilot study, these differences resulted in useful insights, as the researcher was able to compare and contrast the different types of organizations and their utilization of the interface elements on Facebook pages.

Once the participant chose a page to examine, they were asked to describe the reasons why they chose that page. The researcher then asked the participant to browse the page until they felt as though they have had enough time to develop a first impression. At

this time, they were asked to verbally state that they felt as though they had enough time to develop a first impression. This differs from the original version of website experience analysis, where the first impression phase was determined to be complete when a participant clicked away from the homepage. The elapsed time between arriving on a page until the participant verbally stated they had formed a first impression was recorded and analyzed. Participants were then asked to rate and describe their first impression of a page on a scale from 1-10, providing examples of aspects of the page that influenced their first impression. They were also asked to rate their expectation of finding good quality content, and if the page was interesting, providing supporting examples for each question. Finally, participants were asked if they felt as though the page has maintained their interest, and to list the aspects of the page that did so. After answering these questions, participants were asked to continue to explore the page as they normally would.

A similar procedure was followed for the exploration stage of the interview, using questions adapted from the website experience analysis questionnaire, adding the words "based on this organization's Facebook page." Participants were encouraged to browse the organization's Facebook page as they normally would while thinking aloud. During this portion, participants were asked questions regarding trust, commitment, involvement, openness, and dialogue, all elements related to relationship building and management. Each dimension was rated on a scale from 1-10, with 1 being the low or negative response and 10 being the high or positive response, followed by supporting examples of aspects on pages that influenced participants' ratings. Participants were also asked to explain how they would normally browse Facebook pages, in an attempt to combat the potentially unnatural research session setting.

Finally, participants were asked questions related to the exiting phase of their interaction with the Facebook page. The researcher asked participants to give an overall evaluation score of the page, their likelihood of "Liking" the page, and their likelihood of visiting the page again, all supported by explanations and examples. Should they express interest in "Liking" the page, participants were also asked how they felt about the content from the page that they chose appearing in their Facebook "News Feed." Finally, the researcher asked participants to rate the clarity of the questions they were asked. After the session is complete, the researcher ended the recording and answered any questions they might have about the study.

3.2   Data Sources

The data that was collected for this research includes the pre-session questionnaire data, session video recordings of the participants' faces and on-screen interactions, participant responses to the website experience analysis questionnaire, as well as any observations noted by the researcher. This includes navigation behavior, clicks, expressions of confusion, excitement, happiness, disappointment, or any other notable expressions observed and recorded during the sessions. Also, as mentioned in the previous subsection, quantitative measures on a scale from 1-10 were used to determine how strongly they felt either positively or negatively toward a certain dimension of organization-public relationship building. The sample size for this study was fifteen purposefully selected participants. Marshal (1996) asserts that the number of participants required for qualitative studies is often small and becomes apparent gradually as the study progresses. Sampling of participants should continue until no new categories or themes emerge from the data, a concept called "data saturation" (Marshall, 1996, p. 523).

Sampling fifteen participants allowed the researcher to reach data saturation, as other similar qualitative studies suggest that the ideal sample size to reach data saturation is around 6 participants for efficiency. Due to the relatively small sample size (n=15), the quantitative measures of participant feelings toward organizations are unreliable in terms of drawing conclusions about a population. These quantitative measures were instead used as a way to encourage participants to think about how strongly they felt about a certain dimension, either positively or negatively, rather than as an actual attempt to measure and generate statistically significant results. Again, interviews were video-recorded using a software program called Silverback 2 to record both the screen and the participants' faces in order to capture their navigation and exploration behavior on the Facebook organizational pages as well as their facial expressions. The researcher transcribed these video recordings.

The next section discusses the analysis process that took place after all fifteen research sessions were conducted.

3.3   Analysis

Video and audio recordings of the participant interviews were transcribed and added to the observational notes taken during the interviews. Both the observation notes and the transcribed interview text were then thematically analyzed for patterns and emerging themes in the data. Thematic analysis is a process for identifying patterns and themes within a particular data set that is used for its accessibility and flexibility for analyzing qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method involved both watching session videos multiple times, as well as reading and rereading the transcripts and observation notes in order to become familiar with the data. The browsing behaviors,

clicks, words, sentiments, behaviors, and quantitative measurements collected during the interview process were all used to code and separate the themes into manageable pieces. Rather than using one of the available analysis software programs, the researcher manually sorted through the data using a word processor in order to become intimately familiar with the data set. The results were then segmented into the three stages outlined in Vorvoreanu's website experience analysis (2008): first impression, exploration, and exit. As stated in the previous subsection, quantitative measures were used as a way for participants and the researcher to gauge the strength of their feelings toward certain organization-public relationship dimensions.

3.4   Sampling

This study used criterion-based purposive sampling to recruit fifteen participants for in-depth interviews (Patton, 2005). The researcher also employed "snowball" sampling, which involved relying on previous participants to suggest their own contacts and connections as potential participants. Participants were offered compensation in the form of a $10 Amazon gift card for their participation and completion of the research session. The study focused on university student perceptions of organizations on Facebook, and thus required participants to be university students and to have Facebook accounts. As stated in an earlier section, students are a major user group on Facebook and are likely to be active users. Furthermore, university students are likely to become an influential audience for organizations to focus their communication efforts towards as they begin to have disposable income and spending power in the future. University students might also be lucrative publics in terms of sharing information about

organizations, both on social media, in person, and generally on the Web. Participants were contacted in person, by flyer, or recruited via e-mail by being presented with a brief explanation of the research, what involvement will be required from them, and how long the session will take.

3.5   Perspective and Bias

This research was performed from the perspective of a 24-year old graduate student pursuing a degree in the field of human-computer interaction, with a bachelor's degree in public relations and rhetorical advocacy from a large university in the Midwest. The researcher has experience using social media, both professionally and personally. Professionally, he has created and managed various social media accounts for organizations and has experience communicating and engaging with key stakeholders using multiple social platforms. Furthermore, he is active on various different social media as a "typical" user. The researcher does not consider himself a "power user" of social media in everyday life, and is more frequently inclined to use the services for consumption rather than for content creation or to connect with others outside of his personal network.

While these factors may be viewed as a potential source of bias, as the researcher is very similar to the potential participants, they also offer a unique opportunity for understanding the participants of this study. In collecting and analyzing the data, the researcher will work to the best of his ability to remain objective and let the data "speak," while also recognizing the researcher's role as the primary research instrument in a qualitative study. This requires rigorous adherence to the best practices for conducting

semi-structured user experience interviews and following the research protocol for website experience analysis. In analyzing the data, the researcher will become thoroughly familiar with the data set through the process of watching session videos and reading and rereading transcripts of the interviews and allowing the themes within the data to emerge.

In selecting the Facebook pages to examine, the potential bias has been reduced by allowing individual participants to select the pages themselves. As mentioned previously, participants will be directed to choose pages of organizations that they have no prior knowledge or experience with to prevent pre-conceived opinions from affecting the interview. This also allows the researcher to compare a variety of different organizational pages in order to see how the modular elements of a Facebook page, utilized in different ways and filled with different content, affect the perceptions and experiences of students. This comparison will be important in drawing conclusions about each of the elements.

3.6   Chapter Summary

This chapter covered the methodology that will be used in the proposed study, including the data collection methods, the sources of data, analysis methods, sampling strategy, and the researcher's perspective and potential bias. The next chapter presents the data collected, the results of the study, and the major behavior patterns observed during the research sessions.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

The following chapter describes the results of the research study. The first portion

of this section reviews the data collected, the pages selected by participants, and the

process of choosing a Facebook page to explore. The next section discusses behaviors

and observations about generating a first impression of a page, browsing behaviors when

first arriving on an organization's page, and the important interface elements affecting

first impressions. The next section discusses the exploration process and participant

behaviors as well as the interface elements affecting perceptions of trust, commitment,

involvement, openness, and dialogue. The final portion of the results chapter discusses

participant behaviors, observations, and influential interface elements regarding "Liking"

and leaving pages. All sections contain direct quotes from participants that have not been

altered or changed from the interview transcripts.

4.1   Sample

This section details the results of the research study and describes the findings

from fifteen observational interviews using the Website Experience Analysis research

protocol adapted for Facebook pages. In all, sixteen interviews were conducted, but due

to technical issues, one full recording was lost. The researcher used a laptop running a

software program titled Silverback 2 to record the participants' faces as well as on-screen

interactions with Facebook pages. Interviews lasted 40 minutes and 39 seconds on

average, with the shortest session lasting 27 minutes and 24 seconds and the longest

session lasting 55 minutes and 5 seconds. All fifteen recordings were transcribed by hand

for the purpose of analyzing the interviews, which resulted in 160 pages of transcripts.

For a summarized version of the sample description, please see Table 4.1 on the

next page. All participants for this research study were students from a large Midwestern

university. The average age of participants was twenty-one years, with a range of

eighteen to twenty-four years. There were seven female participants and nine male

participants. The education range encompassed freshmen undergraduate students through

Ph.D. students, with four freshmen, two sophomores, five juniors, two seniors, two

graduates, and one Ph.D. student. The sample consisted primarily of students in

technology and engineering-related majors, with six computer graphics technology

majors, six engineering majors, one computer and information technology major, one

computer science major, one finance major, and one health and human services major.

Participants had their Facebook accounts for an average of almost seven years (6.9375

years) ranging from one year to ten years on Facebook. Participants reported spending

roughly one hour on average (60.95 minutes) on Facebook per day, with a range of 9

minutes per day to 240 minutes per day. Participants had an average of 607 Facebook

friends, with a range of 81 friends to 1365 friends and Liked an average of 254 pages,

with a range of 16 to 832 pages. Interestingly, almost all participants stated that they

primarily used Facebook on their mobile devices, with only two participants stating that

they used Facebook more frequently on their desktop or laptop machines, and one

participant using desktop and mobile devices equally for Facebook. Prior to the

interview, participants were also asked to rate their overall enjoyment of using Facebook

on a scale from 1-10, with 1 being the low or negative response and 10 being the high or positive response. The average overall enjoyment rating for all participants was 7.375.

Table 4.1 Sample Description

Partici pant #	Age	Gender	Education	Major	Account Duration	Time Spent	Friends	Pages Liked	Enjoyment
1	22	Female	Graduate	CGT	9 years	30 min/day	572	105	8
2	24	Male	Junior	CGT	8 years	15-20 min/day	208	247	7
3	24	Female	Graduate PhD	IE	10 years	30 min/day	1104	327	9
4	24	Male	Senior	CGT	7 years	4 hours/day	132	529	10
5	20	Female	Junior	CGT	6 years	2 hours/day	962	26	10
6	21	Male	Junior	CNIT	7 years	30 min/day	618	288	4
7	18	Male	Freshman	Financ e	6 years	20-40 min/day	668	267	8
8	21	Male	Junior	EET	8 years	1 hour/day	1076	169	6
9	20	Male	Sophomore	CGT (HCD D)	6 years	1 hour/week	1365	106	4
10	22	Female	Graduate	IE	7 years	>1 hour/day	193	60	7
11	21	Male	Junior	CGT	5 years	5 hour/week	144	322	7
12	18	Male	Freshman	CS	7-8 years	1 hour/week	107	48	8
13	20	Female	Freshman	Engine ering	1 year	1-2 hours/day	81	16	8
14	19	Female	Sophomore	HHS	8 years	2 hours/day	1060	693	7
15	23	Female	Senior	Biome dical Engine ering	8 years	15 min/day	480	27	7
16	18	Male	Freshman	Engine ering	7 years	30 min/day	936	832	8

The next section describes the process of choosing a page and the types of organizations that participants selected to explore.

4.2   Choosing a Page

As stated in the methods section, participants were asked to choose an organization's page that they were not familiar with and did not have any previous interaction with in order to simulate a more genuine first-time interaction with that organization. This reduced the amount of influence that previous interactions with an organization might have on the participants' perceptions of that organization. Furthermore, participants were advised to choose a page that might actually appeal to them in a naturally occurring situation in an attempt to gain a better understanding of how individuals choose new pages to look at and explore on Facebook. While choosing a page, participants were asked to think aloud and express the things that they noticed, liked, disliked, and felt about their experience. The limitations of this approach are reviewed in the discussion section of this paper.

Participants were directed to the "Like Pages" link on Facebook, found on the left side of the main Facebook "News Feed" (see Figure 4.1). This portion of the interface contains a 4-column grid with square "Profile Pictures" from different pages that Facebook suggests for users. The top of the interface has a banner with three navigation links for "Top Suggestions," "Invites," and "Liked Pages." On the right side of the upper navigation banner are links for "Your Pages" and "Create Page." In the grid, underneath the "Profile Picture" for each page is the title of the page in bold font accompanied by a blue checkmark if the page has been "Verified" by Facebook. Beneath page title is either the number of "Likes" that a page has, or the friends of an individual that have also "Liked" that page. Aligned to the right beneath the page's profile picture is a square "Like" button. Facebook does not provide information about how pages are suggested to

users or what factors affect Facebook's suggestion algorithms. Multiple participants expressed that they disliked the grid-based layout of the "Like Pages" interface, citing the inability to sort or filter the pages that Facebook had suggested for them. Participants also had difficulty determining what type of page they might encounter before clicking on a "Profile Picture," as this information only appears after hovering over the "Profile Picture."
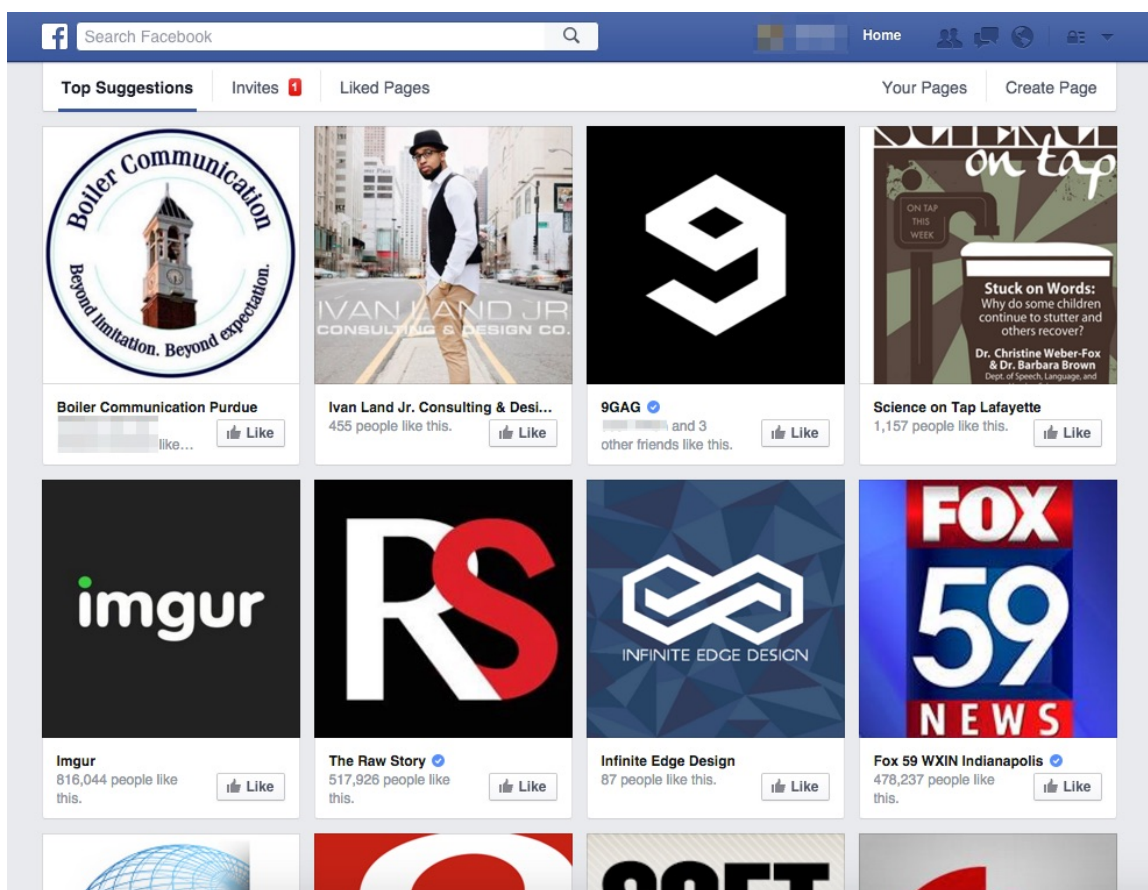
Figure 4.1 "Like Pages" Interface

Out of the sixteen Facebook pages that were chosen by participants, nine were categorized as some form of media or publishing organization. Of these nine media and publishing organizations, pages were categorized as the following: two "News/Media

Website" pages, two "Media/News/Publishing" pages, two "Magazine" pages, two "Entertainment Website" pages, and one "Broadcasting & Media Production" page. The remaining six pages chosen by participants were categorized as follows: one "TV Show" page, one "Application" page, one "Non-Profit Organization" page, one "Horses - Organization" page, one "Local Business" page, one "Home/Garden Website" page, and one "Arts & Entertainment Page."

After expressing interest in selecting a particular Facebook page, participants were asked what elements or aspects affected their decision to choose that page. Most participants suggested that the most prominent interface element affecting their decision was, of course, the large image of the page's "Profile Picture." Most "Profile Pictures" included logos for the organization. Logos for the chosen pages were described as "simple," "modern," "strange," "neat," "asymmetric," "playful," "catchy," "cool," "sleek," "weird," and more. One potential explanation for the relatively large number of media and publishing organizations chosen by participants is the similarity of their logos. These organizations primarily used profile pictures with large letters in different fonts with single-color backgrounds.
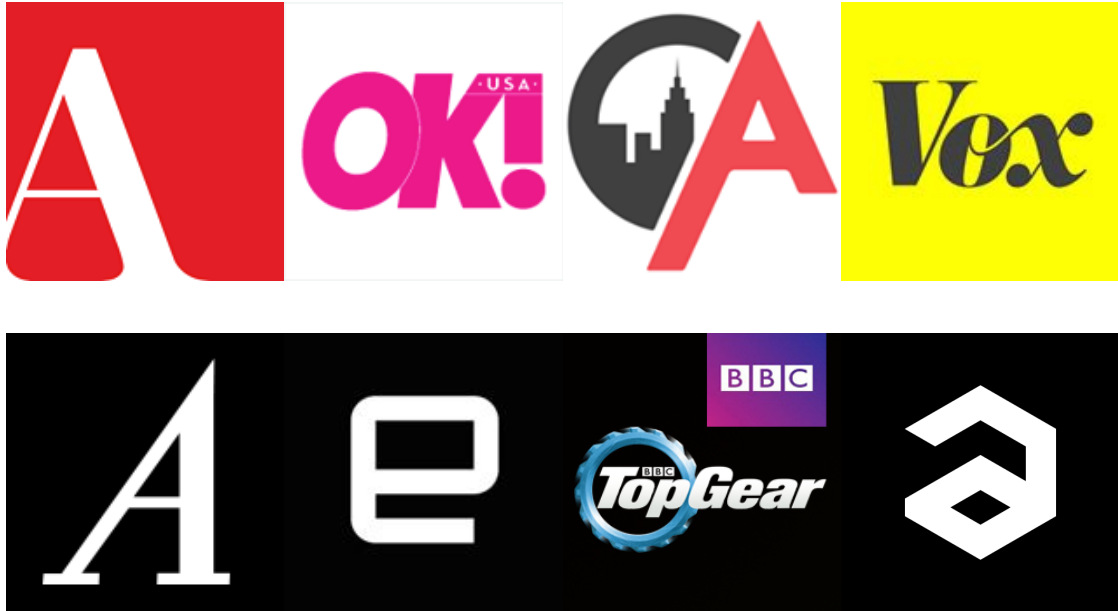
Figure 4.2 Examples of Facebook "Profile Pictures" from sample pages

"Yeah, it's playful. Most of these other pages are just people or boring words, but this one they put a little art on the words that makes me want to explore it more."

Seven participants also suggested that they were drawn to the page they selected because of personal relevance to them, their interests. They used a combination of the logo, the organization name, and, after hovering over the page, the type of organization in order to determine that a page might be relevant to their interests.

"After I saw the graphic I was drawn to how many people 'Like' it and after I moused over the name of the page and saw it said 'Center for Research on Globalization,' I was like, wow, that's an important issue."

Another participant suggested that they anticipated the page to be somewhat related to their major because of the name and the associated profile picture which was the organization's logo containing the name "Top Gear" with a gear graphic surrounding the word "top."

"It looks like an organization, I'm not sure though. Like Top Gear, probably related to engineering."

Multiple participants also expressed that the number of "Likes" that a page had influenced their choice to examine that page or not. They suggested that the number of "Likes" legitimized the page, and that a page with more "Likes" was more likely to have content that others approved of or that they themselves would be interested in consuming.

"It has a million 'Likes,' it must have some type of content that is appealing to so many people, it'll probably be appealing to me as well. And I want to see what is everyone looking at."

However, the number of "Likes" that were necessary to make a page legitimate enough to explore seemed to be relative to other similar pages that participants had seen or were familiar with from previous interactions and experience. Only one participant chose to examine a page with under 100,000 "Likes," suggesting that this was a particularly important criterion when selecting a page that participants were unfamiliar with.

"It had a very catchy logo and well I was thinking about clicking on the other one but I saw it only had 27 'Likes' and this one had 360,000 so I thought this page might be, like, have more stuff on it. And more content because it has more people 'Liking' it."

Finally, it is interesting to note that only one participant stated that the blue "Verified" checkmark was an important factor in determining the page to examine. She suggested that although she was not aware how pages became verified, she trusted it which enhanced her perception of the page's legitimacy. She also noted that she was

familiar with the checkmark as a symbol for a verified page across other websites and interfaces as well.

> *"How about Vox, I know that Vox is verified and I'm not familiar with Vox. Is that*
>
> *fine?" … "So I noticed the blue checkbox" … "And the verified one. It also*
>
> *showed me that ok, this is a legit thing."*
>
> *"Yeah I think that that's a standard across platforms now."*

The next section describes the process of developing a first impression of an organization's Facebook page and reviews the common behaviors, important interface elements, illustrative quotes, and other observations.

4.3 First Impression Phase

Immediately upon arriving on an organization's Facebook page, participants were instructed by the researcher to explore the page as they normally would until they felt as though they had been able to generate a first impression. Throughout this process, participants were reminded to think aloud and describe things that they noticed, liked, or disliked about the page. After participants verbally stated that they had generated a first impression of a page, they were asked to rate their first impression, their expectation of finding good quality content, and their expectation of the page to be interesting, all rated on a scale from 1-10. They were also asked if the page maintained their interest and to list the things on the page that did so. After each rating, participants were also asked to provide examples of interface elements on the Facebook page which influenced their rating.

The elapsed time that it took for participants to generate a first impression of an organization's page that they selected varied greatly. The average time to generate a first

impression was 3 minutes and 52 seconds, with a range from a brief 16 seconds to a relatively lengthier 11 minutes and 11 seconds. An interpretation of this variation in the amount of time taken to generate a first impression of pages can be found in the discussion section.

The next section describes the browsing behavior patterns that emerged from observing participants and their first experiences with the Facebook pages they selected.

4.3.1   First Impression Phase – Browsing Behaviors

The research sessions revealed two major behavior patterns when developing a first impression of an organization's Facebook page. The first major behavior pattern exhibited by most participants involved briefly looking at the "Cover Photo" at the top of a Facebook page, followed by scrolling through "Status Updates" posted to the "Timeline." The second major behavior pattern exhibited by participants involved thoroughly examining the "Cover Photo," "Profile Picture," "Reviews," "About" section, and "Timeline," or some combination of those elements on an organization's Facebook page in order to generate a first impression.

The first behavior pattern of looking at a page's "Cover Photo" and then scrolling through "Status Updates" was common for nine participants in this research study. The "Cover Photo" is the first and most prominent interface element that appears at the top of the page and spans 315 pixels tall by 851 pixels wide. The "Cover Photo" also encompasses the organizations title, the type or category of the organization, and four or more customizable buttons for "Like," "Share," "Message," and more. The "Profile Picture" is also within the lower left corner of the "Cover Photo." Based on its size, position, and the amount of information contained in the "Cover Photo," it makes sense

that this graphic would be the first and most prominent element for participants to notice, and thus, something that many organizations with pages on Facebook would want to invest time in designing and producing.

> *"I like this picture of the chickens ('Cover Photo') and I think if I went to a website like this I wouldn't spend that much time on their page, I would probably go to their official website."*
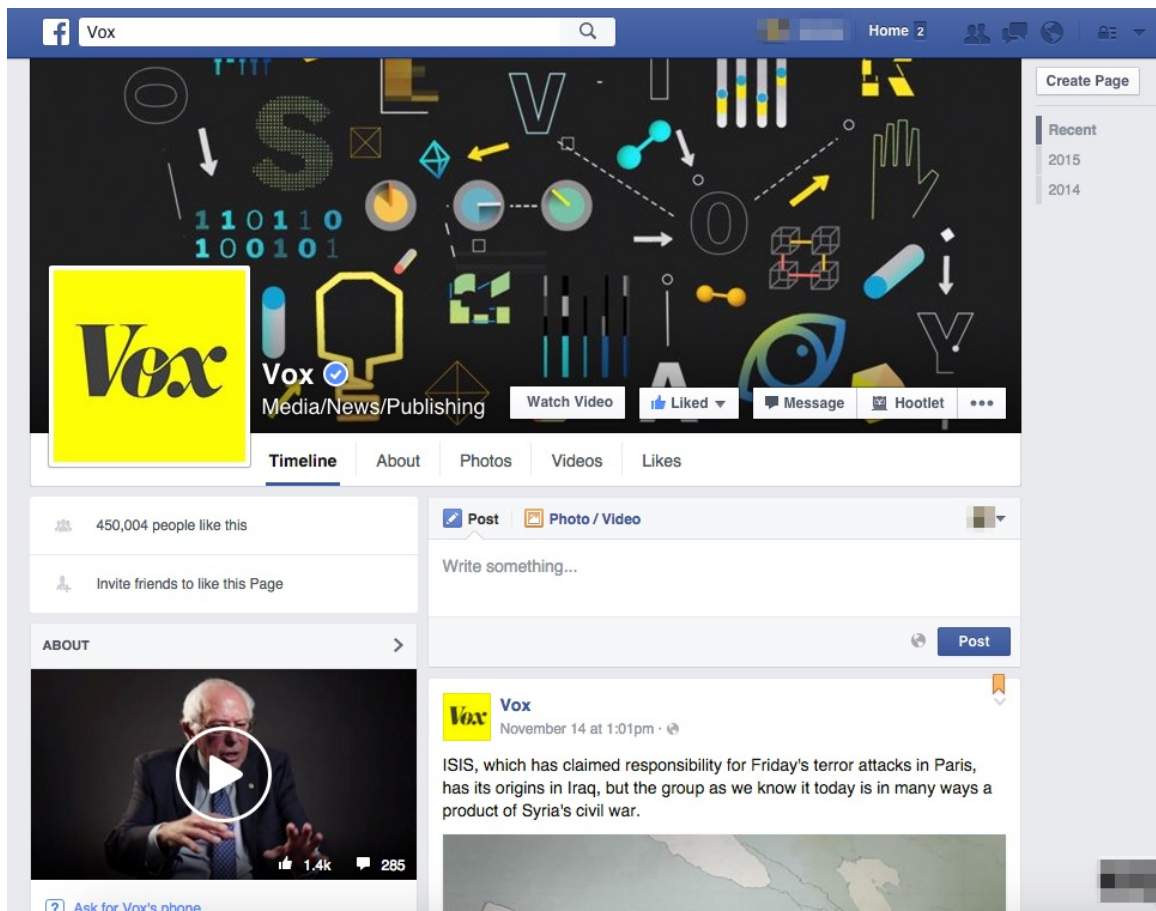
Figure 4.3 Top of an organization's Facebook page layout

Many participants suggested that they were able to gain a significant understanding of what to expect from the rest of the page and, to a lesser extent, what the

organization's purpose was based solely on the graphic and information found in the "Cover Photo."

> *"Well, I feel like first impression is going to be these graphics at the top with the 'Cover Photo' and the logo because that's the first thing that catches my eye. Other than that, just scrolling through the rest of the 'Feed' and seeing how many – the amount of 'Likes' each article has. Because that's the only content that they post."*

After briefly looking at the "Cover Photo," most participants immediately began scrolling through the "Status Updates" in the "Timeline" found on the right side of every Facebook page. Participants suggested that they were conditioned to ignore almost everything on Facebook pages other than the "Timeline," as that is where the important information and up-to-date content can be found.

> *"So usually I stick to the feed because usually that's all I tend to."*

This tendency to ignore everything but the "Timeline" of Facebook pages is reviewed in more detail in the discussion section, but it is important to note that the average participant had an average of almost 7 years of experience with Facebook. Many stated that they had grown accustomed to the layout of Facebook pages. One participant suggested that even while browsing their friend's or acquaintance's pages on Facebook, there was a tendency to ignore most of the interface elements on the left side of the page such as the "About" section, "Friends," "Photos" to a lesser extent, "Videos," "Likes" and more.

The second browsing behavior, exhibited by four participants, was to examine a page's "Cover Photo" and "Profile Picture" and then actually browse through the

interface elements at the top of a page such as the "About" section, "Photos, "Reviews,"
amount of "Likes" and other links using either the navigation module just below the
"Cover Photo" or the larger navigation modules to the left of the "Timeline."

> *"So my first impression, so OK, I see that it's a 'Media/News/Publishing' site*
> *('Cover Photo'). I see that it has Bernie Sanders on the left ('About' section). And*
> *then there's a 'Pinned' thing about Elizabeth Warren ('Timeline'). And I am a*
> *liberal, so it doesn't shock me."*

> *"So I've already clicked on the stars ('Reviews') when I first got here. Before I*
> *read any content let's move up to 'About.' Uhhh, OK, uh for, they have a link to*
> *their website."*

Both the "About" page and the "Reviews" section, where present, were impactful
on participants' first impressions of the organization's page they chose to examine. The
"About" section contains a "Page Info" section where organizations can input text into a
field for "Address," "Short Description," "Long Description," "Bio," "Company
History," "Mission," "Contact," "Website," and more information. There is also an
"Overview" section where the organization can input a map, directions, a phone number,
and a small space for a Web page link. Contrary to other sections of the interface and
previous research about the adverse effects of too much text on Web pages, participants
expected to find a significant amount of text-based information on the "About" page's
"Page Info" section, particularly in the "Long Description" section. Multiple participants
expressed negative feelings toward a lack of information, but had positive feelings
toward the presence of email addresses and webpage links.

"I give it a 9 ultimately because on their 'About' page - because it lacks, I mean

they could put some information about who they are and what they do. They could

bring some information from their Website to their 'About' page."

Two participants in particular relied heavily on the "Reviews" section in order to

draw on the comments and information from other people who may be familiar with the

organization. "Reviews" is an optional interface element that organizations can choose to

place on their page. Reviews are presented in the form of stars, from a 1-5 rating. The

average review rating appears prominently, highlighted in a light blue color on an

organization's page beneath the "Cover Photo," and "Like Counter" When clicking on

"Reviews," users are presented with the proportions of 1-5 ratings that have been given to

a page, as well as text-based reviews from users.

"Yeah so I went ahead and clicked on Reviews. Usually the first thing I click on

what everybody thinks about whatever is on the screen, so 4.4/5 and they have

838 reviews, obviously the page reaches out to people and it seems to me that, so

yeah from that, so I look to see what it does. So obviously people like it, so that's

usually my biggest deterrent when people don't like it and don't care for what it

stands for then obviously something's not right with the page.

One final first impression behavior pattern that emerged from the research was

that four participants had one exceptional video content experience during their first

experience with a page which influenced them enough to scroll to the top of the page and

"Like" it.

"Ok so that was like entertaining enough of a follow-up experience that I'm going

to scroll to the top of the page and 'Like' this. So that's cool. And then I'll

probably actually return… I'll probably Like it and then I'll go to like, well at this

time I'd probably leave the page."

For these participants, the videos that they watched were either funny, entertaining, dramatic, or awe-inspiring enough to warrant "Liking" a page. This rich experience also gave them enough information about what the page was about to feel as though they could make an assessment of the page.

"This page seems pretty fun. So can I click this? (Video link). Oh my gosh, is he

going to crash those cars? Holy crap. Wow. Now I like this page, it's so fun. Oh

my gosh. How do I go back? Wow, this is pretty fun, fun experiments, car

crashing, oh my gosh. Yeah overall this is a fun page where people do weird stuff.

Diet Coke and Mentos? Crazy experiments."

One participant did state, however, that after having a good experience with a video, he would "Like" the page and then immediately leave. This might be explained by the fact that after "Liking" a page, that page's content will begin to appear on a user's own Facebook "News Feed."

"Yeah I usually go until I have a good experience or I find like a couple of bad

experiences in a row or if it's really shitty infrequent posts and then I'm like, 'Oh,

this is useless,' and then I leave."

The next portion of the first impression section reviews the interface elements that users cited as influencing their overall first impression of the page, expectation of finding good quality content, and if the page would be interesting to them.

4.3.2   First Impression Phase – Interface Elements Affecting First Impressions

After giving a rating for their first impression, expectation of finding good quality content, and expectation of the page to be interesting, participants were asked to give examples of interface elements on the pages they based their ratings on. Participants were also asked if pages maintained their interest, and if so, what aspects of the page on the page did so. The following is a breakdown of the most important interface elements participants cited for forming their first impression of a Facebook page, both positive and negative. Participants primarily used the "Cover Photo" and "Timeline" to generate a first impression of a page, as well as the number of "Likes" a page had received, the photos, graphics, and videos on a page, and how well the page met their expectations. The following are detailed descriptions of the interface elements referenced as having an impact on forming a first impression of a page.

4.3.2.1   First Impression Phase – Cover Photo

As mentioned previously, the "Cover Photo" plays a major role in forming a first impression of an organization's Facebook page because it is the first and largest image that users are presented with upon arriving on a page. Furthermore, the "Cover Photo" is filled with information about the organization's name, the type or category of the organization, and buttons for interacting with the page. In one case, a participant even noticed that the organization's "Cover Photo" had a message for the user when hovering over it which asked them to subscribe to their newsletter in order to have news "delivered to their inbox." Ten participants cited the "Cover Photo" when asked what elements or aspects of the page influenced their first impression.

4.3.2.2   First Impression Phase – Status Updates in Timeline

The "Status Updates" that organizations posted to their page's Timeline were the second most frequently cited interface element when asked to give supporting evidence for first impression, expectation of good quality content, or page interest ratings. Seven participants discussed the role that "Status Updates" played in forming their first opinion. Of those seven participants, many mentioned that the variety of content posted in "Status Updates" was overall a positive aspect of Facebook pages. Participants seemed to enjoy seeing not just articles linked from websites, but also photos, videos, interesting graphics, and other content. Furthermore, post frequency was mentioned by six participants as a positive influence on their first impression of a page, while one participant disliked the frequency with which an organization posted to their page.

> *"And they're very active, as this post was less than 30 minutes ago on one, an hour ago. And it looks like they do 1 or 2 posts a day."*

Many participants also mentioned that it was important for organizations to post original content from their pages, rather than reusing content they had found from somewhere else or stealing content from others. They stated that this increased the amount of value that the page had, as the content was exclusive and not just borrowed from another site or page. Also, some participants noted that posting original content contributed to the page's branding effort in an overall positive manner.

> *"Yeah because that makes them unique and like in their branding of themselves because there are some other pages that only share funny things from other people but you can probably find them on your own, but they're actually producing their own stuff."*

Multiple participants noted that it was acceptable for an organization to use someone else's content if it was user-generated content that had been sent directly to them. This was viewed as a way of interacting with the page's target audience and perceived positively.

> *"And it looks like they're interactive with their audience members. This is the second or third picture I've seen of them posting a picture that another person sent to them so it looks like they're interactive with their members which is good." …. "It shows they care and they're not all about their business."*

Participants also stated that the content organizations posted to their pages should be relevant to their interests and should meet the user's expectations after selecting a page based on its title and "Profile Picture." Participants who were unable to determine the organization's purpose quickly just from browsing the content were left confused and sometimes frustrated.

> *"I thought that this should be related to machines because this site is 'Top Gear,' and it is related to machines, but yeah it's just related to cars…"*

Finally, participants commented on how they were able to get an idea of what the organization's "tone" or voice was from the language used in their "Status Updates." Participants described pages or organizations as "sassy," "sarcastic," "professional," "funny," "humorous," "in-tune," "truthful," "informative," and more. Another salient issue for many participants, particularly those examining one of the many news organization's pages from the sample, was political bias. Participants were skeptical of pages using biased language, and kept a keen eye out for content that leaned one way or another on the political spectrum. Participants from this demographic suggested that they

preferred more moderate news sources, despite many of them stating in other parts of the research session that they preferred pages that aligned with their interests.

"They're humorous. They're making jokes about themselves."

"This page looks very informative, it's very honest, and truthful. It – I see they have uh, it seems, images seem to cover things from the rest of the world and it is. So my impression is that this page is very informative and it actually matches its title, and uh. It actually matches its title and what the page is about."

4.3.2.3 First Impression Phase – Number of Likes

The number of "Likes" that a page had as well as the number of "Likes" that their posts received from users was cited by seven participants as having an influence over their first impression. The total number of "Likes" that a page has received appears at the top of a page just below the "Profile Picture." As stated previously in the section about choosing a page to examine, the number of "Likes" on a page or the "Likes" on a page's content reinforced the participants' perception that the page and its content were somehow worthwhile. Again, participants had difficulty determining an exact number of "Likes" required in order for them to be interested in it, but rather stated that it was a judgment that they made relative to other pages or content that they had viewed.

"I typically just look at popular articles because I feel like they're worth my time… But if something only has 23 'Likes' I just feel like I wouldn't really want to read it."

As stated previously, all but one page that participants selected to examine had under 100,000 "Likes," further suggesting that this is an important criterion for individuals and their perceptions of Facebook pages.

4.3.2.4   First Impression Phase – Photos, Videos, and Graphics

Another important factor that participants cited as being influential on their first impression of Facebook pages was the photos, graphics, and videos on their page. This includes the actual photographs that organizations post to their pages as well as the associated thumbnail images that accompany links posted to the "Timeline." Five participants mentioned that photos and graphics on a page contributed to their first impression, expectation of finding good quality content, and expectation of the page to be interesting. Participants had positive reactions to what they deemed to be "professional-looking" graphics. They also mentioned that they enjoyed when a page's graphics contributed to the overall branding of the page and when graphics were consistent with the theming of the rest of the content. Finally, color consistency was also perceived positively on pages.

As mentioned previously, videos also provided rich content experiences for four participants and were cited as a primary reason for eventually "Liking" a page. Participants mentioned that they often watched videos while on Facebook, but one participant discussed his frustration with being taken out of the Facebook interface in order to watch a video he had clicked on. Participants particularly disliked when video links took them outside the Facebook interface and then immediately presented them with an advertisement.

4.3.2.5   First Impression Phase – Relevance to Interests and Expectations

One of the major overarching themes that had an impact on participants' first impressions was the relevance of the page to the individual's interests. Participants were all encouraged to select pages that they might actually be interested in outside of the research session, but occasionally pages did not meet the expectations of individuals or were not the type of organization that the individual expected from the profile picture and other information available to them in the "Like Pages" interface. Three participants made positive comments about how the content of the page they selected matched the title of the page and their expectations of the page. Two participants suggested that they were dissatisfied with how the page did not meet their expectations.

"The main reason that this newspaper does not attract me is because it is not related to my daily life."

While most participants appreciated when organizations utilized the space that Facebook provided for them well, many expressed that they would have likely only spent a few seconds on a page that they were disinterested in.

The next section discusses some of the interesting observations regarding the development of first impressions of Facebook pages for this particular demographic group.

4.3.3   First Impression Phase – Interesting Observations

There were two major themes that emerged about the demographic group during the research sessions. The first theme was that participants were conditioned to focus on only the "Timeline" of Facebook pages. The second theme that emerged was a general skepticism toward advertising. The first observation, discussed briefly in the first

impression behavior section, is that this particular group of individuals expressed through their comments and browsing behaviors that they had been conditioned to ignore nearly everything on Facebook pages except the "Timeline." Many participants spent most of their time during the first impression phase of their browsing experience scrolling through the "Timeline" and commenting on the "Status Updates."

> *"Basically I think I've been conditioned to look at this side only ('Status Updates' in the 'Timeline'). Because all of these years I've been on Facebook, like all of this stuff on the left side is like - here's how many friends your friend has, here's how many photos they're tagged in, here's how many pages they 'Like.' I'm not here to look at that, I'm here to look at any statuses they've posted or any cool things that have happened on their 'Timeline.'"*

As mentioned previously, participants were conditioned to primarily look at "Status Updates" in the "Timeline," likely because of how long many of them had used Facebook and their understanding that the "Timeline" content would appear in their own personal "News Feed."

> *"Um, well I mean it is just a basic Facebook layout so there's nothing terribly innovative or interesting about it in that way. I'm just used to how Facebook works. There's like a column in the middle that you scroll down to see things on."*

> *"Like, any person who's just going to get on this – like, I see that there's 230,000 people who are on this page - they're probably just going to go straight to the*

'Timeline.' They might go to 'Donate' or 'Connect With Us', but most of their

time will be spent on the 'Timeline' and that's where most anyone's time will be."

Participants expected that they would be able to get an understanding of what an organization's purpose was based almost solely on the content that was being posted to their "Timeline." When this expectation was not met, individuals were left feeling confused or slightly frustrated with their experience on the organization's Facebook page. For one participant, the purpose of an organization remained unclear even after scrolling through multiple articles, photos, and other "Status Updates" posted to the page's "Timeline" as well as exploring the "About" section. The participant was forced to visit the organization's website in order to finally understand the purpose and function of the organization, which still seemed relatively unsuccessful.

"I kind of, well OK, here's my process. I'd just go really fast and look at this side

only (scrolling through 'Timeline'). And then kind of get a gist of what they do."

The second major theme that emerged about this demographic group during the first impression phase of the browsing experience was a general skepticism toward advertising. At least four participants expressed that they were skeptical of pages that were trying to advertise to them and stated that they were irritated or annoyed when clicking on a link led them to a page that immediately presented them with an advertisement, especially advertisements that obscured the main content that they intended to view.

"Yeah, like I will choose a topic that I'm interested in the most and I'll click and see what happens, probably it will be a new window with a lot of sites, advertisements, and then I'll just close the window no matter what content they have."

"Yeah they should at least not block the content that I'm going to read. Sometimes I read an article and then I just start to read a line of very weird things, I just have to realize that I start to read advertisements [sic]. That was really annoying… I don't like advertisements to show at the center of the content that I'm going to read, I'll just cancel."

Participants were also skeptical of some pages being dedicated advertising or "shill" pages in disguise. Magazine and news pages that focused on particular subjects such as cars or technology were particularly susceptible to this skepticism, as they tended to feature graphics focusing on product images. Pages that were not perceived as being primarily concerned with selling products or whatever the organization had to offer generally received positive comments in regards to first impressions.

"Um, I feel like it wasn't a self-focused page. So um, the fact that it gave me what I wanted and it wasn't trying to sell itself. Not once was I getting sold something that I read. They were just giving me nice content."

"… because I don't go to a page to learn about that organization, I go to a page to learn about what that organization is about and that isn't what they're selling usually."

Finally, when watching videos or clicking on links that led an individual directly to an advertisement rather than the content that they intended to see, participants became frustrated and annoyed at the organization.

"It just takes a while to load and the page often contains advertisements like the 30-second stuff. It makes me not want to watch it anymore. So my interest fades…"

"…I want to watch the content but you're giving me an advertisement."

The next section discusses the exploration phase of visiting a Facebook page and outlines the major behavioral themes that emerged during this phase as well as the interface elements of Facebook pages that affected participants' perceptions of trust, commitment, involvement, openness, and dialogue.

4.4   Exploration Phase

After rating their first impression of an organization's Facebook page and giving supporting evidence for their ratings, participants were instructed to continue exploring the page while thinking aloud. While exploring, participants were asked to rate their perceptions of the organization regarding the public relations dimensions of trust, commitment, involvement, openness, and dialogue based on the organization's Facebook page. Participants were asked to provide examples of interface elements that affected their ratings. This section discusses the behavior patterns that emerged during the

exploration phase and details the questions related to each public relations dimension and the interface elements that participants used as justification for their ratings.

4.4.1   Exploration Phase – Browsing Behaviors

When prompted to continue to explore a page after describing their first impression, participants either continued to scroll through the page's "Timeline" or began to explore the parts of the interface they had previously ignored such as the "Photos," "Videos," "About," or "Liked By This Page" sections of pages. Because of their familiarity with Facebook's general layout and structure, participants did not seem to go through the process of orientation, or becoming familiar with the how the page worked and forming a mental map of the page (Vorvoreanu, 2008). Participants were focused mainly on engaging with the content, primarily in the "Timeline," during the exploration phase. It should be noted again that when participants were asked when they would normally be finished looking at a page, most stated that would not typically spend more than 5-10 minutes on a page that they were interested in. Participants who did not find their page interesting stated that they would have left within seconds.

During this phase, participants were asked to rate their perceptions of organization-public relationship dimensions on a scale from 1-10 and provide examples in the form of interface elements to support their ratings. The first dimension examined was trust, which is outlined in the following section.

4.4.2   Trust – Interface Elements Affecting Trust

While exploring an organization's Facebook page, participants were asked the question, "On a scale from 1-10, 1 being 'not at all' and 10 being 'very much,' do you

feel that you can trust this organization based on their Facebook page?" These ratings were then used to determine whether the participant's perception was positive or negative, rather than attempting to derive any statistical significance for ratings across pages. Positive or negative comments were then separated and placed into different categories. The frequency and intensity of positive and negative comments were considered during the analysis process. It is interesting to note, however, that the overall average rating for trust was a somewhat positive 7.375. This overall somewhat positive perception of trust, and other dimensions discussed later, toward an organization is somewhat of a departure from previous research that found students to be generally dismissive or negative toward organizations on Facebook. The interface elements affecting trust were the "About" section, graphics such as the "Cover Photo" and "Profile Picture," the "Like Counter," "Reviews," links to other social media, and other interface elements that were not mentioned frequently enough to be considered a theme but still are worth reporting.

4.4.2.1   Trust – About Section

When asked about trust, multiple participants referenced or navigated to the "About" section in order to explain their rating. In the "About" section under the "Page Info" header, the amount of text and information present in the "Long Description", "Company Overview," "Bio," or "Short Description" was influential over participants' perceptions of trust. Some pages had only "Short Description," "Long Description," "Mission" and "Website" sections in their "Page Info" sections. Furthermore, the "Mission" portion of the "About" section is where participants expected to find

information about the general purpose of the organization and their goals. There was an expectation to be able to quickly determine what an organization's purpose was and what they hoped to achieve based on the information in the "About" section.

> *"Ok so I'm going to click their' About,' usually if I'm confused I go here first. So, it says it's 'packed with the biggest stories and best photographs' ('Company Overview'). They talk about movies and music and TV, but I didn't really see any of that, I kind of just see celebrities. I can call and subscribe. They have an Instagram and a bunch of other social media sites, which is cool."*

4.4.2.2   Trust – Graphics and Branding

Participants' perceptions of trust were also affected by graphics on the organization's Facebook page such as the "Cover Photo" and "Profile Picture." Graphics that were described as professional-looking and added to the overall branding of the Facebook page had a positive impact on participants' perceptions of trust. Participants mentioned that graphics that were obviously made by the organization themselves displayed a level of authenticity.

> *"I feel like, just looking at their graphic even, I feel like they made it themselves and I feel like it's authentic. I don't recognize any part of their graphic or their content or their videos that might have come from something else. So I think that I can trust that they do, that they created their own content and whatever else they share, it's clearly words from or what it's mocking [sic], I don't see that they're infringing on rights of other things."*

As with forming a first impression of an organization and its Facebook page, having a clear and recognizable brand was mentioned again as enhancing perceptions of trustworthiness.

"I would give it a 9, they have their own brand and they post regularly."

However, graphics also detracted from participants' perceptions of trustworthiness when content was perceived as unprofessional or low quality. In one instance, low-resolution photography and graphics significantly affected how trustworthy a participant thought a news source was. This participant suggested that they would expect higher quality, higher resolution photos from a more trustworthy organization.

"Because this news, I think, this picture, or, it's reflecting what's happened. Yeah and the content is not satisfied [sic]. Yeah the picture, it's just like I used the phone to record this, not that professional."

Finally, two participants commented that their ratings of trust were negatively affected by the presence of "silly" graphics when they expected the organizations page to be more serious or professional. For one participant, a "meme," or picture with writing placed at the top and bottom, that appeared in the page's "Timeline" was continuously referenced throughout the research session as having a negative impact on multiple different ratings. Another participant thought that the presence of graphics that were entertaining or "fun" had a negative impact on the authority of the organization.

"It seems like a fun page but not authoritative enough. Just because they are more like having fun than pursuing the truth, so I don't feel like they're scientific, but just that they're just having fun…. This picture here, this 'Star Wars' picture here… Yeah, they're being kind of silly rather than scientific research."

4.4.2.3   Trust – Like Counter, Shares, Comments

The "Like Counter" at the top of a page and the amount of "Likes" that the page's "Status Updates" received were both influential interface elements on participants' perceptions and ratings of trust. Four participants mentioned that they used the amount of "Likes" that a page had received from other users to determine how much they could trust a page. As with the formation of a first impression, the amount of "Likes" that was necessary for individuals to trust a page was either based on how large the participant perceived the organization to be, or relative to other pages that they had had interacted with previously.

"So you almost have a million people that 'Like' this page, so I would say I would trust it, compared to lower numbers or...."

The amount of "Likes," as well as "Shares," and "Comments," was mentioned by another participant as an indication that the page and the organization must be trustworthy.

"That would be more of the amount of people that are following this page. The 60-75,000 Likes each post gets. The 5,000 shares and tons of comments on every post. So not all people are ignorant and 60,000 would be quite a large sampling of the population, so, if a lot of other people are coming here to spend time then it obviously must not be that bad. Something to check out at least."

4.4.2.4   Trust – Reviews

For the pages that had reviews enabled, participants mentioned the "Reviews"
section as part of their criteria for evaluating how much they trusted a page. Participants
seemed to be aware of both the number of users whom had reviewed the page they were
examining as well as the the overall average review rating that was represented by blue
stars near the top of the page underneath the "Profile Picture." All of the pages selected
by participants that had the "Reviews" section was present had at least 4.4 star ratings.

> *"So they have almost 40…. 43, almost 44,000 reviews and they have 4.5 out of 5
> stars, so I guess 44,000 people won't lie. So that's my main interest is the amount
> of people that reviewed it."*

4.4.2.5   Trust – Other Interface Elements

A number of other interface elements were mentioned as having an influence on
trust, but they were either less frequent, less salient, or received only passing mentions.
The "Pages Liked By This Page" and "Visitor Posts" sections were used by two
participants to evaluate trust. Displaying the "Pages Liked By This Page" was viewed as
a method for organizations to network and draw on the credibility of other pages in order
to enhance their own credibility on Facebook.

> *"I guess it's a good way to kind of network. And be like, 'Oh, if I 'Like' Glamour
> Magazine, maybe they'll 'Like' me back.' And then maybe if Glamour Magazine -*

and I don't know how well-known that is - but if it's a well-known magazine then you know that maybe adds credibility."

"They've definitely networked in this way of mutual Liking. And that would mean that OK! Magazine 'Liked' Cosmopolitan and then Cosmopolitan would be like 'Oh, who 'Liked' me?' And then checked OK! Magazine's page and then said, "Oh, ok, this is a magazine that I can get behind.'"

Linking to an organization's other social media pages was also perceived positively by participants, as it potentially showed that organizations were spending time and effort to appear on other platforms and to reach out to users of other social media as well.

"One thing that does add credibility is the sheer number of social media sites they have. So they have Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest. I feel like if this were a fake, um, an illegitimate organization then that takes a lot of effort to maintain. So they might actually be a real company."

The remaining interface elements or factors affecting participants' perceptions of trust were the presence of the "Verified" blue check mark next to an organization's name, tagging an article's author in the descriptive text of a "Status Update," and using unbiased language in the headlines, descriptions, and other text of the content.

"The transparency again with tagging the person in the article and making it clear what's going on helps."

"*Judging by the language that they're using, the way that they're writing up their headlines on their posts. The content seems factual, just the facts. The contents not leaning me toward one way or another."*

Also, the participant that chose to examine a non-profit organization suggested that simply by being a non-profit organization, that automatically enhanced his perception of trust. This was because the participant did not expect for profits or monetary incentives to be a major determining factor in the organization's behavior.

"*I'd probably say an 8. Because they're a non-profit organization, I can't see them - it's like if the organization was making money they could potentially lie to you to get more money, but this organization isn't really getting anything from what you do for them."*

4.4.2.6   Trust – Interesting Observations

At least four participants mentioned that they would need to have had some prior experience with an organization beyond interacting with their Facebook page in order to trust them. In some cases, participants suggested that they would be more likely to trust an organization if they had received a recommendation from a friend, observed something about the organization in the "real" world, or visit the organization's website in order to feel comfortable fully trusting the organization. This may also reemphasize the overall skepticism this particular demographic seemed to have toward organizations on Facebook.

> *"I would say like a 5, mainly because I'm not familiar with this organization, I've never heard of it before. I've never heard any 3rd person opinions about it before, I've never had any friends be like, 'Oh, I read this on The Atlantic.'"*

> *"And I guess it's not any higher because I don't know how successful this magazine is. I've never heard of them outside."*

In one case, a participant later found out that the organization's page that they were exploring was actually affiliated with another organization, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), that they were familiar with from watching television programming. This had an overall positive affect, as the individual associated the trust that they had for BBC with the unfamiliar page that they were exploring.

"Because I trust BBC, it's like British Broadcast Company. It's a national thing. I think…. Just because I trust BBC and I always watch the documentation of BBC and so… Although this field is not what I'm familiar with, but BBC tells me that this website is trustworthy."

The next section discusses the public relations dimension of commitment and the interface elements that participants reported as being influential over their ratings.

4.4.3   Commitment – Interface Elements Affecting Commitment

After asking participants about their perceptions of trust, the next set of questions in the research session assessed the public relations dimension of commitment. Commitment is related to the organization maintaining a relationship with a certain public (Bruning & Ledingham, 1998). Participants were asked, "On a scale from 1-10, 1 being not at all and 10 being very much, do you feel that this organization is interested in maintaining a relationship with you?" After giving a rating, participants were asked to provide examples of interface elements or aspects of the page that influenced their rating. The average rating for commitment across pages was 6.75, which is overall a neutral to slightly positive trending score. Content posted to the "Timeline" and comments on "Status Updates" were most commonly referenced as having an impact on perceptions of commitment. The following section discusses the interface elements that positively and negatively affected participants' perceptions.

4.4.3.1 Commitment – Status Updates and Timeline

One of the most commonly referenced examples of interface elements that affected participants' perceptions of whether an organization was interested in maintaining a relationship with them was the content they posted to their "Timeline" in the form of "Status Updates." Participants mentioned post frequency, the relevance of the post to the page's intended target audience, posting user-generating content, and the use of personable text as important characteristics of "Status Updates" that were influential over their perception of commitment.

Generally, posting more frequently was perceived positively in terms of commitment. Participants mentioned that posting more often might suggest that an organization is actively trying to provide information to their followers.

"I'd say a 7. Because I see they update often, like the 29th of September, 30th of September. Yeah, they literally update everyday so I guess they treasure the relationship between us and the organization."

"Status Updates" that were deemed to be relevant to an organization's target audience were also cited as having a positive influence on two participants' perceptions of commitment. Furthermore, reposting user-generated content was also perceived positively as it showed participants that an organization was invested in their audience. Posting a "Status Update" with the descriptive text in the form of a question was also perceived as a method for organizations to start discussions amongst the page's followers and to generate comments on their posts. Conversely, content relevance was cited as a

negatively influential factor when a participant did not feel as though they were considered to be the organization's target audience.

> *"I would say that even though they don't comment back that often, they do pose questions that lead to more opinions and drive conversations between other people that Like the page. So I feel like them posting more opinion type questions is them trying to stay connected."*

Finally, "Status Updates" containing personable text in the description, headline, or thumbnail text were perceived positively in terms of commitment. Multiple participants noted that they enjoyed when organizations on Facebook used content that sounded as though it came from an actual person.

> *"Personable text, like the titles for their articles as well as the description Facebook text. It's personable. It's relatable, it's actually something that sounds like a Facebook post rather than a PR-approved statement about a new exciting product or something silly like that…. It sounds like a friend wrote it, or like I wrote it. Maybe even like they were tired when they wrote it."*

4.4.3.2 Commitment – Comments and Replies to Comments

The next most commonly referenced interface elements that participants gave to support their ratings of commitment were the comments that users had posted to "Status Updates" and organization's responses or lack of responses to those comments. Participants viewed the comments that were made by others as an indication that the organization was interested in maintaining a relationship with them. The mere presence of comments conveyed to participants that organizations were fostering a sense of

community through their pages and the content they posted. Replies to comments were also perceived positively.

>*"Yeah I would say that's good, that they probably support or agree to some extent what a person posted. I would say any company 'Liking' someone's comment is good."*

However, participants were very critical of the lack of response comments on behalf of organizations.

>*"And then, they 'Like' a lot of you know, other organizations, but they're not interacting with their audience. They're interacting with companies and organizations that their followers would like, but…"*

>*"I guess there are Likes, but I feel like OK! Magazine isn't Liking these. They're from the target audience, so like, um, it's pretty much like, 'we're going to put an article out and you can Like and comment. We're not going to say anything in return if you have any questions, we're not going to answer them.'"*

Furthermore, one participant noted that on the magazine page that they were exploring there was a significant amount of spam in comments and the "Visitor Posts" sections. This individual expected the organization to moderate the spam and delete comments that were questionable in their content and the account that they came from, stating that the presence of spam made it difficult to legitimately interact with an organization or others in the comments and "Visitor Posts."

>*"I mean some of these are kind of just trash ('Visitor Posts')... They don't, kind of, put constraints on what people can post. So they're going to get spam like this.*

And when you do that, you can't really interact because there's no point in

replying to spam."

4.4.3.3   Commitment – Organization Type

With the large amount of media and publishing organizations, many participants felt slightly neutral about the question regarding commitment. They stated that news organizations in particular were more likely to be concerned with simply posting information out that they were hoping to broadcast to their audience rather than actually being interested in maintaining a relationship with their users and followers. The relationship was considered to be more one-way, where users who 'Liked' the page would be more interested in passively consuming the content posted by the page. One participant suggested that the very act of sharing information actually indicated that the organization was interested in maintaining a relationship with them.

"Just because they're just a newspaper, so they're just going to keep posting.

They don't really have too much to keep the attention of its followers unless the

followers are actually interested in what they're doing."

Two participants did suggest that the organizations that they were examining actually required user interaction and engagement in order to be successful. They mentioned that these organizations needed users to share their information to continue to grow and become more popular on social media. These organizations were focused on media and publishing.

4.4.3.4   Commitment – Presence of Interface Buttons and Navigation Links

Participants also mentioned that the presence of "Like," "Comment," and "Share" buttons in "Cover Photos" as well as on "Status Updates" were an indication that organizations were interested in maintaining a relationship with them and other Facebook users. As these buttons and links built into the Facebook interface, this might suggest that simply by having a Facebook page, organizations might enhance their audience's perceptions of commitment. One participant suggested that Facebook is first and foremost a social medium.

> *"Like every other page, each post has 'Comment,' 'Share,' and 'Like,' and I always share things when I think it's super interesting and I will 'Like' posts when I think this is a good article or it's doing good things just to encourage this page to be witnessed by more people."*

The participant that chose to examine a non-profit organization perceived the navigation links such as "Donate" and "Connect With Us" as the organization communicating that they were interested in maintaining a relationship with him and the rest of their target audience. The participant even noticed the order of the navigation links and suggested that the it might mean something about the organization's priorities when it comes to maintaining a relationship with their target audience.

The next section discusses the public relations dimension of involvement and the interface elements that participants reported as being influential over their ratings

4.4.4   Involvement – Interface Elements Affecting Involvement

After asking about commitment, the next set of questions in the research session assessed the public relations dimension of involvement. Involvement is related to

willingness or enjoyment of behalf of an organization when it comes to helping (Bruning & Ledingham, 1998). Participants were asked, "On a scale from 1-10, 1 being not at all and 10 being very much, do you think that this organization enjoys helping others?" After giving a rating, participants were asked to provide examples of interface elements or aspects of the page that influenced their rating. The average rating for involvement across pages was 6.375, which is overall a neutral to slightly positive trending score. The following section discusses the interface elements that positively and negatively affected participant's perceptions of involvement.

4.4.4.1 Involvement – Type of Organization

For the three participants that chose animal-related organizations and non-profit organizations, these participants suggested that enjoyment of helping others was inherent in the nature of organization. For the non-profit organization, the participant mentioned that the entire purpose of the organization was to help others, and rated the organization a 10 in terms of involvement.

> *"Um, so they're trying to help others and that's those who work there, that's kind of their passion so… And being a non-profit organization, anyone who probably works there is probably a volunteer and even if they are getting paid they're probably not getting paid a whole lot."*

The two animal-related pages also received positive ratings based almost solely on the type of organization and the participants' perceptions of the organization's purpose.

"I would say 10. In the sense that they want to help you be able to raise your own chicken in your backyard. Let's see, I mean that's the name of their site and then they have a post about how you can incorporate that into your own home."

4.4.4.2   Involvement – Expectation of Involvement Information

It should be noted that six participants expressed that they had no expectation of finding information related to the organization's enjoyment of helping others on their Facebook page. Participants suggested that they might expect to find that type of information on a regular website, but that Facebook pages were for primarily posting content and updates related to the organization's primary function. When asked if the lack of this type of information about enjoying helping others affected their perception of the organization, participants suggested that it did not.

"No, I wouldn't look specifically for content for raising awareness for issues in the world on this page. It doesn't seem like it's geared towards this. It seems like maybe if something really tragic were to happen, though, I feel like they would share something about it to try to latch onto whatever is happening in the world."
"No, I would expect to find that on their main website."

Only one participants mentioned that their perception of an organization was negatively impacted by the lack of involvement-oriented content posted to the page's "Timeline."

4.4.4.3   Involvement – Other Interface Elements

As stated previously, there was little expectation of finding information regarding the organization's enjoyment of helping others. Participants did not cite many

interface elements that were able to be merged into themes, but rather suggested that they based their rating for involvement off of the overall impression that they got from the organization. Some interesting interface elements that were cited as examples were the "Like Counter" and the content in the "Timeline." Participants suggested that the amount of "Likes" that an organization's page had was a reflection of the size of the organization, and large organizations were more inclined to help others based on the availability of resources and their ability to tap into their large following to help spread information

>*"...Any organization that does have like, over 500,000 people following or like 1 million followers tends to stop just focusing on their content and reaching out to their environment as well depending on their power, kind of at that point with people because they can utilize it to the benefit of philanthropy as well since they have this many followers they could probably share things about helping out others."*

Participants also mentioned that they were able to get an understanding an organization's enjoyment of helping others based on their "Status Updates" in the "Timeline." Using "friendly" language in "Status Updates" suggested to participants that the organization enjoyed helping others. Also reposting user-generated content had a positive influence on perceptions of involvement.

>*"They're telling me how I can be entertained beyond this page. And the fact that they're telling me how I can be entertained and not how I can do something for them or be entertained specifically by them, they're not saying come watch our movie or come buy our product, they're like, 'Hey, there's this other movie or other product that you can check out that we like. We like these things and maybe*

you'll like them too.' So kind of like a friend. And I feel like that's the way

Facebook pages should be. It's friend-oriented rather than organization-oriented.

Even though they are an organization, it feels like a friend."

Furthermore, in the case of a media organization, unbiased language was

observed as being helpful in comparison to more biased or "pushy" language.

"So one thing I like about this newspaper is that it's unbiased. It doesn't have any

bias. it doesn't have any preference, yeah. It's very neutral, it uses neutral

language."

The next section reviews the results about the public relations dimension of

openness and the interface elements that participants reported as being influential over

their ratings.

4.4.5   Openness – Interface Elements Affecting Openness

After asking about involvement, the next set of questions in the research session

assessed the public relations dimension of openness. Openness is related to the

organization's willingness share information. Participants were asked, "On a scale from

1-10, 1 being not at all and 10 being very much, do you think that this organization is

open about sharing information?" After giving a rating, participants were asked to

provide examples of interface elements or aspects of the page that influenced their rating.

The average rating for openness across pages was 7.75, which is overall a somewhat

positive trending score. Participants primarily referred to "Status Updates" on a page's

"Timeline" as well as the "About" section as having an influence over their perception of

openness. The following section discusses the interface elements that positively and

negatively affected participants' perceptions.

4.4.5.1   Openness – Status Updates

Seven participants mentioned "Status Updates" as examples in support of their rating of whether an organization was open about sharing information. Characteristics of "Status Updates" that positively influenced participants' perceptions of openness were posting original content from an organization's website, sharing factual information, posting frequently, sharing a variety of content, and tagging the original author of a piece of content in the "Status Update" descriptive text.

Participants were able to determine that a "Status Update" was shared from an organization's own website based on the grey hyperlink in the bottom left corner of the thumbnail of a post, just below the content headline and thumbnail snippet.

"Almost every post is related to the news on the' Top Gear' website so they definitely provide news to read and if you're interested you will be directed to the news and that's their website."

One participant noticed that a media and publishing organization was tagging the original author of the article that they were posting to their page's "Timeline" in the descriptive text of the "Status Update." This participant commented that this practice provided a level of transparency that she enjoyed from a media organization, and that it helped to increase openness and reduce her perception of the organization as being biased.

"Yeah, because I think if you're willing to put your name on it. Here's another one that's tagged, that's nice. If you're willing to put your name on it and say, 'Oh I did this this is what I think,' I think that the credibility goes up as opposed to anonymous or hidden or it being published to the website without a name. And

I think that it kind of goes back to journalistic integrity. But yeah, they have a lot

of tags which is cool because then you can be like, if you write something

ridiculous you can have trolls spam at you on Facebook."

4.4.5.2   Openness – About Section

Another commonly cited interface element that influenced participants'

perceptions of openness was the page's "About" section. Participants felt positively about

an organization's openness when they provided a link to an e-mail address or other

contact information as well as a website link in the "About" section. Participants also

mentioned that providing a detailed "Short Description" and "Long Description" in the

"About" section was an influential factor in their decision to rate an organization's

openness.

"And I like how they have their email address. You can ask them questions and

there's more credibility."

"Um, they have in their 'About' tab, tells who they are. Hm. They have a pretty

lengthy description about that. Says their website… I would say like maybe also

on their website you could find more information which they have readily

available on their 'About' page - they have a pretty long description…. From this

page they give you a good amount of information but they also give you the ability

to get more information if you want to so there's an email here."

"It creates more credibility for them, like I can see more of what they do because

maybe they can't post everything, they'd be like blasting Facebook. They have a

whole page for themselves. So I think that Facebook is maybe a bait and hook to

bring more people to their actual page which is probably what their larger

objective is."

However, a page's "About" section also had the potential to negatively influence participants' perceptions if the organization had not sufficiently filled out the information in each field. Four participants mentioned that they weren't able to gain enough information about an organization from their "About" section descriptions, which had a negative impact on the perception of openness.

> *"So it's not like a ton of information. You have like 5 lines of information about*
>
> *like what's behind the page. But they do have a website apparently."*
>
> *"Yeah I would have liked to see more background information; it doesn't really*
>
> *say anything about who started it…. So I guess at this point I would just go to*
>
> *their website."*
>
> *"Um, no. Because when you click on their 'About' page, they make very vague*
>
> *statements like, 'Packed with the biggest stories, the best photos and exclusives.'*
>
> *It's like, eh, well every magazine claims to do that. But… It doesn't really say*
>
> *what the company is."*

4.4.5.3   Openness – Type of Organization

Four participants mentioned that, to some extent, the organization that they were observing would have "nothing to hide" based on the type of organization that they were. The participants felt as though the organization and the information that they have was not sensitive in nature or would not require withholding any information from their audience.

"I don't think that an organization like this would have much to hold back. If anything, they would probably release their sensitive information in a comic or comedic way. So I don't think they are… I think they're more than informative, but they don't have anything to hold back."

"I would say 10, very open. I don't really think there's anything to hide as far as raising chickens."

The next section presents the results about the public relations dimension of dialogue and the interface elements that participants reported as being influential over their ratings.

4.4.6   Dialogue – Interface Elements Affecting Dialogue

After asking about openness, the next set of questions in the research session assessed the public relations dimension of dialogue. Dialogue is related to two-way communication and the organization's interest in listening to their publics. Participants were asked, "On a scale from 1-10, 1 being not at all and 10 being very much, do you think that this organization is interested in listening to what people like you have to say?" After giving a rating, participants were asked to provide examples of interface elements or aspects of the page that influenced their rating. The average rating for dialogue across pages was 5.625, which is overall a neutral trending score. Participants primarily referred to comments on "Status Updates," the "Visitor Posts" section, as well as the replies or lack of replies on behalf of the organization as having an influence over their perception of dialogue. The following section discusses the interface elements that positively and negatively affected participant's perceptions.

4.4.6.1 Dialogue – Comments, Likes, and Visitor Posts

When asked about whether participants felt as though an organization was interested in listening to what people like them had to say based on their Facebook page, participants often immediately went to the comments and "Likes" on "Status Updates, "Reviews," or "Visitor Posts" to see if organizations were responding to comments and discussions started by users. Three participants were able to find examples of where organizations had replied to or "Liked" comments made by users, which was perceived positively.

"Here it looks like this one they actually respond to this person's feedback… So it looks like they are reading them because they're Liking them…. Oh! They are commenting. So yeah, it makes me think that even the bad reviews they're commenting on, so yeah, they're responding to the feedback that they get, so um, that makes me think - if you don't want the feedback you're definitely not going to respond to the feedback you get… Any group who's willing to get feedback, whether it be positive or negative, just tells me that they want to improve and make sure that they're doing the best style can so the fact that they're wanting to do better is a good thing."

However, seven participants were disappointed by the lack of replies. This suggested to many participants that the organization was more concerned with getting information and content out rather than interacting with their users. One participant suggested that she would even like to see the author of the article that was being shared to organization's Facebook page comment on the post and interact with the users and

potential readers of the article. Multiple participants referenced other organizations that they felt did an exemplary job of using their Facebook page to facilitate dialogue with their audiences.

"...Ok, they have a Facebook page, visitors can post stuff and people can 'Like' stuff on their posts, but I think what would bump up my rating is if the actual writer of the post engaged with people on it... And that interaction I think like, I think people are interacting with their content and they're probably like using that in some way to figure out what to post, what's working and what's not working."

"You would think that they would hire people to kind of talk with people. I have seen organizations where they kind of message people back or if people aren't very happy they kind of talk with them and try to calm them down and try to solve it for the better of the company but here it doesn't look like they've ever messaged anyone back."

"Not often, but occasionally maybe why not just respond to one or two comments here.... It would seem more down-to-earth, they're actually interacting with the people on Facebook."

4.4.6.2   Dialogue – Other Interface Elements

Although comments, replies, and "Visitor Posts" were the primary interface element that was referenced as being influential over participants' perceptions of dialogue, there were some other notable interface elements mentioned as well. "Reviews," the presence of an e-mail address, and the "Like Counter" were also

mentioned as having an influence on perceptions of dialogue. Three participants mentioned the "Reviews" section as having an influence, and two of them suggested that because the organization had opened their page up to allow reviews that they were open to hearing feedback from people visiting their page.

> *"Um, well they did - people who made the page did open it up for reviews."*

> *"I'd give it an 8 because they have a 'Reviews' tab set up. Um, that - so they want to hear feedback from different people and so they have that set up and available so people can give feedback."*

Two participants stated that simply by having a page on Facebook that meant that the organization was interested in listening to people.

> *"They do have a Facebook page and Facebook is like a social networking sort of thing. Social media. If they didn't care about feedback at all they would just have their own website and their own Facebook page."*

> *"Yeah, I think by having a Facebook page, by that very nature, they're interested in that. Um…."*

Two participants used the number of "Likes" that a page had as a way of gauging the size of the organization. They suggested that large organizations were less likely to be interested in listening to what people like them had to say. Also, they suggested that it would be more difficult for organizations with a large number of followers to actually engage and listen to their audience in a meaningful way. With smaller organizations, they suggested, it would be easier to reach an actual person that had some sort of authority over the page.

> *"I feel like an organization that's usually this large, it's hard to make a*

difference. I feel like if it's a smaller person if it's one person that's running a

page then maybe you can make an impact. I feel like it gets less and less easy to

make an impact when it - the more followers they have, there's more people

behind the scenes and it's harder to reach someone who probably does the final

posts."

This concludes the exploration phase of the results section. The final phase of visiting an organization's Facebook page is the process of exiting the page. The next section discusses the exit phase, the questions participants were asked, and the common themes that emerged from their responses.

4.5   Exit Phase

Before leaving the Facebook Page, participants were asked final questions regarding their overall evaluation of the page, giving both a rating and an overall description of the things that they liked and disliked about the page. Participants were also asked to rate their intent to "Like" the Page and revisit the Page later on, followed by giving examples of aspects of the page that influenced their decision. Again, it should be noted that participants stated that they would have made the decision to "Like" or leave a page much earlier in a normal situation. The primary themes that emerged, both positive and negative, were that participants were focused on the content posted to the "Timeline" of a page in the form of "Status Updates." This section describes these themes in more detail.

4.5.1   Overall Page Evaluation – Interface Elements Affecting Overall Impression

To conclude the research session, participants were asked the question, "On a scale from 1-10, 1 being very bad and 10 being very good, how would you evaluate this organization's Facebook page overall?" Participants were asked to give a description of their overall evaluation and to provide examples of interface elements that affected their overall evaluation of the page. The average overall evaluation rating for pages in this sample was 7.125, which trends relatively neutral to somewhat positive. The commonly occurring positive comments were about the "Status Updates" posted to a page's "Timeline," as well as some combination of the graphics and photos found on the page.

4.5.1.1   Overall Page Evaluation – Status Updates on Timeline

When describing their overall evaluation of a page, participants primarily mentioned content posted as "Status Updates" to the "Timeline." More specifically, participants made positive comments about the frequency of posts, the content variety, the quality of content, and the lack of bias in posts. Conversely, participants made negative comments about the lack of content variety, the lack of structure or randomness of posts, and pages that used posts as advertisements.

Three participants mentioned that they enjoyed how frequently their organization posted "Status Updates" to their page. Participants used the time stamp at the bottom of each post to determine how often organizations were posting to their pages. Participants mentioned that having multiple posts per day was a good cadence for posting.

"So overall, this page is kind of well-organized and has a lot of contents in there. It's a well-developed page and I can see a lot of recent posts… They have

multiple posts in one day."

"They maintain the page in that they're constantly posting, they're responding to

reviews. So it's not – they're constantly working on it, and yeah."

Two participants mentioned that they based their overall evaluation of a page on

the original content that they were posting. Participants felt that original content

contributed to the branding of a page and made the information that the page shared more

valuable or more genuine.

"They have their own content, they're pretty genuine and authentic to their own

things, they're not just copying and sharing other people's content. And they have

like, their own little thing that they put into everything that they share. It's not

ever just a straight post from another thing or just sharing a video, the have either

something they say about it or they've tweaked it in some manner."

Two participants mentioned that the variety of content that an organization posted

to their page was an important and influential factor in their overall evaluation of a page.

They suggested that they enjoyed seeing articles, videos, photos, and other types of

content posted to pages and that not all of their posts were the same.

"They have a wide range of audiences. And that does show in their posts, not all

of their posts are the same."

Conversely, four participants mentioned the lack of content variety on an

organization's page as having a negative impact on their overall evaluation of a page.

Negative comments regarding variety mentioned that pages either focused too much on

one type of content or posted about one topic too frequently.

"I feel like they're using all of the space that they've given them. I'd say it's not the best use because it's repetitive. They keep posting article after article, there's not an updated 'News Feed' or updated any kind of post besides just a hyperlink to their website."

"I would just say diversity of posts is kind of what I gravitate towards on Facebook. You can't always just post the same thing."

"I would like to see more diverse content, or if not diverse content like more off-shoots from it."

The overall quality of the content that was posted to pages was also referenced as being influential on the overall evaluation of an organization's page. One participant suggested that they liked how there was no "junk" in the page's "Timeline."

"Just in general there's no junk in their main 'Feed' which is usually all I look at… All of the other stuff fades away for me. Even their 'Likes', I didn't look at their 'Likes,' I didn't look at how many people follow them, I look at the comments on their posts and I look when their posts are happening and then I link away."

Finally, with the prevalence of media and publishing organizations, two participants mentioned that they appreciated the lack of bias in the "Status Updates," but one participant suggested that they would need to do more research in order to determine if an organization was biased or not.

"I would like to make sure they're not trying - not being biased in their writing or presenting like a slanted view but I don't know that for sure if that's going on so that takes further investigation but again I'm always skeptical."

"It seems like, you know, they keep bias and propaganda out of their statements,

so overall I'd give this page a 10/10. It does the job that it's shown me it does."

4.5.1.2   Overall Impression – Combination of Status Updates and Graphics

Despite a page's "Status Updates" being the most commonly cited interface

element that participants based their overall evaluation of a page on, many individuals

used a combination of page elements to make their evaluation. Participants mentioned

that in conjunction with the content that was being posted in the form of "Status

Updates," they also used the "Profile Picture," "Cover Photo," "Photos," and other

images to evaluate a page. Participants appreciated high-quality graphics and noted that

they were able to gain an understanding of the purpose of the organization based on the

combination of factors mentioned.

"Overall I mean, I give it a 10/10. I mean its purpose is clear, what they do is

clear. They cover things from all over the world globally, their images show

things from all over the world."

Two participants cited this combination of graphics and status updates, along with

the lack of a professionalism on behalf of the organization as negatively influencing their

perception of the page.

"I think the layout is similar to any on the Facebook page… But the content, the

photos, the topics of this news influences my impression about this newspaper. I

think it is not a very professional newspaper and not that serious and not very

attracting."

4.5.2   Liking and Returning to a Page – Interface Elements Affecting Likelihood

During the exit phase, participants were also asked to rate their likelihood of "Liking" a page and their likelihood of returning to a page on a scale from 1-10. Overall, six participants actually "Liked" the page that they explored during the research session. The average rating given to the likelihood of "Liking" a page was 6.1875, which is considered neutral to somewhat positive. The average rating given to the likelihood of returning to a page or visiting a page again was 3.875, which is considered somewhat negative. Again, the most commonly referenced interface elements either positively or negatively affecting a participant's intention to "Like" a page or return to a page were the "Status Updates" posted to the "Timeline."

Participants suggested that their decision to "Like" a page was based primarily on the content that the page posted as "Status Updates." They cited the content variety, relevance, ease of understanding, and convenience as important factors affecting their decision to "Like" a page and returning to a page.

The interface elements that negatively affected participants' intentions to "Like" and return to a page were the relevance of the content to the individual, the post frequency, the lack of post variety, the lack of clear purpose based on posts, and posts that redirected participants away from Facebook.

Participants suggested that after they "Liked" a page, they would be unlikely to visit a page again because they understood that the page's content would begin to appear in their "News Feed." Participants suggested that they would rather passively receive the content from pages rather than actively seeking out content by visiting the organization's page.

"Well they'll show up on my 'Feed' now. So to actually go back to their page…

Probably not, maybe more like a 4. Somewhere in there. I mean I don't know if

I'm going to go back to their page. Like, what would I even go back to their

Facebook page for?"

"I would say a 4, because I may visit it when it pops up on my News Feed, but I'm

unlikely to specifically search 'MythBusters' here to get to the page."

The next section briefly describes the overall evaluation of the question clarity

and the rating that participants gave to how clear or confusing they perceived questions

that they were asked about Facebook pages to be.

4.6   Question Clarity

Before ending the research session, participants were asked, "Overall, how would

you rate the clarity of the questions that you had to answer about this Facebook page on a

scale from 1-10, with 1 being very confusing and 10 being very clear?" The average

rating for question clarity was 8.625 with only 2 participants rating the clarity below an 8.

Overall, participants expressed that they felt the questions that they had to answer for the

research session were clear and easy to understand. However, participants did mention

that they had difficulty expressing their feelings in terms of numbers and would rather

describe the reason why they felt a certain way about a particular question rather than

having to assign a numerical rating to that feeling. Participants often tended to give

reasons for why they felt a certain way about a particular public relations dimension

before they remembered to give a numerical rating to a questions. Many participants had

to be reminded that they were asked to give ratings first, rather than explanations or

descriptions.

The next chapter is the discussion section, which describes the overall implications for organizations using Facebook pages, the best practices to implement and avoid based on this research, the implications for Facebook's page design, and observations made about the sample population.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

This section outlines the implications for organizations using Facebook pages and summarizes which interface elements were most important for each phase of visiting a Facebook page, as well as which interface elements were most influential over perceptions of trust, commitment, involvement, openness, and dialogue. This section also discusses the potential implications for Facebook page designs, the observations made about this demographic, and the limitations and future research that might be useful for exploring some of the themes that emerged from this research study in more detail.

5.1   Discussion – Overall Implications for Organizations Using Facebook Pages

Overall, organizations hoping to be found on Facebook should keep in mind that their "Profile Picture" can be very influential when users are browsing through Facebook pages, especially from within the "Like Pages" portion of the interface. Participants made choices about pages to select based primarily on the "Profile Picture" that was displayed and the impression they were able to generate about that organization. Interestingly, a large number of participants from this group chose organizations with "Profile Pictures" displaying a single, large letter with single-colored backgrounds. Having a "Profile Picture" that is able to convey important characteristics of an organization or a brand is an important consideration when selecting an image to use.

Overall, organizations using Facebook pages should take from this research the

importance of focusing on posting high-quality, original content that reinforces their brand on Facebook pages multiple times per day. Participants overwhelmingly paid attention to the "Timeline' section of Facebook pages, and suggested that if they were to "Like" a page, that the content posted to a page was the most important or influential interface element affecting their decision. Having a recognizable brand, which includes a "Profile Picture" showing the organizations official logo is a good practice. There is occasionally a tendency for organizations or entities to manipulate the "Profile Picture" for special events on Facebook, but they should consider the potential ramifications this may have on their audience's ability to find them and recognize them amongst a large variety of other pages.

Table 5.1 Phases and Influential Interface Elements

Phases	Influential Interface Elements	Notes
Choosing a Page	Profile Picture, Organization Title, number of Likes	Hover over information such as organization type also mentioned
First Impression	Cover Photo, Status Updates, Likes, Photos, Videos, Graphics	Branding, relevance to interest of participant, and content variety, frequency, originality, and tone were all mentioned
Exploration	Timeline, Status Updates, Photos, Videos, About, Reviews, Liked By This Page	Participants focused mainly on engaging with content in the form of Status Updates in the Timeline during this phase
Exiting	Status Updates, Graphics	Status Update frequency, variety, quality, lack of bias, originality, and lack of advertising, along with the perceived quality of graphics including the Profile Picture, Cover Photo, and Status Update images

When asked about trust, many participants referred to the "About" section and used the amount of information present in the descriptions provided as well as the presence of contact information and an email address. Organizations should ensure that they have filled out all of the information slots available to them, in sufficient detail, erring on the side of providing more information and text rather than less. Professional-looking graphics and images as well as the number of "Likes" were also important to trust. Including high-resolution images in "Status Updates" and the "Photos" section is an important consideration for organizations looking to increase their credibility and

trustworthiness on Facebook.

For perceptions of commitment and how interested organizations were in maintaining a relationship with them, participants commonly mentioned the language used in "Status Updates," post frequency, and how often the organization commented back as determining factors. Organizations should strive to find a balance with post frequency that ensures they are updating their page consistently without annoying their audience. They should also respond to at least some of the comments left on their "Status Updates," as many participants stated that even a small number of replies would enhance their perception of the organization.

For involvement, or enjoyment of helping others, few participants actually expressed any expectation of finding this type of information on an organization's Facebook page, but the organization type that is shown in the "Cover Photo" next to the "Profile Picture" was a good indication to some participants that the organization enjoyed helping others. While this information was not necessarily expected, providing information about how an organization is involved in their community or enjoys helping others could be a great way of surprising their publics in a positive way.

Participants made their judgment of openness of sharing information based again on the content and frequency of "Status Updates" and how much information was available in the "About" section. Again, this reiterates the importance of posting consistently and filling out all of the information in the "About" section that Facebook provides, and providing contact information and website links.

The dimension of dialogue was primarily affected by the presence of comments and "Likes" on "Status Updates" as well as in the "Visitor Posts" and "Reviews"

sections, and whether or not organizations replied to users. Organizations hoping to increase their audiences' perception of this dimension should dedicate effort to providing unique replies to their visitors' comments. Merely having one or two replies to comments on "Status Updates" was perceived positively. For organizations without the available resources to provide this form of interaction, "Liking" a visitor comment is also a viable but less effective solution for enhancing perceptions of dialogue.

Finally, while exiting a page and making an overall evaluation, participants used a combination of the "Status Updates" as well as the graphics and photos on the page. In deciding whether to "Like" a page, most participants mentioned that the content of the "Status Updates" in the "Timeline" and the relevance to their interests. Many participants suggested that they would be unlikely to return to pages, stating that if they "Liked" a page they would become passive consumers of the content that was delivered to their own personal "News Feed" on Facebook. Organizations should keep in mind that their visitors that have "Liked" the page are unlikely to see every "Status Update" that is posted. This might have implications for campaigns that organizations run on Facebook are sequential or require knowledge from a prior "Status Update" in order to make sense to an individual. Furthermore, overwhelming users' personal "News Feed" by posting too frequently or duplicating posts might cause users to become annoyed with the page and unfollow.

5.2   Discussion - Overall Implications for Facebook Design

This research has potential to inform Facebook's design of the page system and the interface space that they provide to organizations and individuals alike. While in the "Like Pages" interface, many participants stated that they had never visited that portion

of Facebook before and were unfamiliar with it. If exploring pages is an important function that Facebook wants to facilitate for users, it might be lucrative to promote the "Like Pages" section or place it more prominently on the interface. Also, participants were somewhat confused about how pages were suggested for them, and disliked the inability to sort and filter this portion of the interface. As mentioned previously, there is currently a heavy focus on content when browsing a Facebook page, while other interface elements seem to fade away for participants. Many participants suggested in some way or another that they had grown used to the traditional Facebook layout, and that it was somewhat boring or familiar to them. This might mean that it is time for Facebook to switch up the layout of their page interface. However, this could have negative impacts on the overall user experience as well, as participants were able to easily navigate Facebook pages and did not have to orient themselves to the structure and layout of the interface due to their familiarity.

Facebook has an opportunity as a platform to facilitate exploration and browsing online and to be a powerful medium for exploring new pages, organization, and content, should they choose to tailor their interface in such a way. Placing an emphasis on certain interface elements that make it easier to save, reference, and share information, articles, photos, and videos with very specific groups of users might satiate individuals' desires to research topics for social situations. Currently, participants did not view Facebook as their primary method for exploration.

5.3   Discussion – Observations of University Students

There were many revealing and interesting observations made about this group of 18 to 24-year old university students during the research study. This particular group of

fifteen individuals had about seven years of experience on Facebook on. With so much experience with the interface and the layout of Facebook, participants browsing pages were conditioned to ignore the portions that they deemed to be less important. Participants focused on scrolling through a page's "Timeline" without paying much attention to the surrounding interface elements to the left of the timeline such as "About," "Apps," "Photos," "Videos," "Liked By This Page," "Reviews," and other sections that pages chose to make visible. This is an interesting and prevalent behavior that could have implications for what organizations choose to focus on when creating and managing Facebook pages. Multiple participants spent the majority of their time scrolling from one "Status Update" to the next.

During the pre-session questionnaire, most participants also stated that they used Facebook primarily on their mobile devices rather than the desktop browser version of Facebook which the session was conducted in. In many ways, this observation reinforces the importance of focusing on content posted in the form of "Status Updates" to an organization's page "Timeline." Mobile research that is similar in nature to this study is needed in order to understand mobile users' perceptions of organizations using Facebook pages and how users on the Facebook mobile application across mobile device operating systems and platforms interact with their devices and the interface elements that are most prominent and important to them during certain portions of their browsing experience. Facebook pages on the mobile Facebook application currently follow a similar structure, with the "Cover Photo" and "Profile Picture" placed at the top of the interface, followed by action and navigation buttons, how many individuals "Like" a page, the "About" section, "Photos," "Videos," "Reviews" and more. The order in which some of these

elements appear can be determined by the organization managing the page. It is not unreasonable to believe that many individuals might be inclined to focus on the "Status Updates" posted to the "Timeline" while browsing pages in their mobile application as well.

During the first impression phase of the research session, the time that it took participants from this group to generate first impressions of the pages they chose varied widely. This variation might be attributed to participants being asked to verbally express when they felt as though they had been able to develop a first impression. Participants were also thinking aloud and being asked to explain and clarify statements and point to things within the interface that they were looking at or reading. Also, it might be difficult for participants to be conscious of when exactly they had come to a first impression of a page.

There is, however, another potential explanation for the variation in first impression times. As stated previously, Nielsen (2011) suggests that users often make a decision to leave Web pages in 10-20 seconds. "Bad" pages might gain only a few seconds of a user's attention while "good" pages have the potential to capture a few minutes (Nielsen, 2011). In the case of this research study, the participants who generated the short 16-second impression and long 11-minute impression rated their overall first impression of each page highly (8). However, the participant that was able to quickly make a first impression gave low ratings to their expectations of finding good quality content (4) and being interested in the page (4).The participant that spent 11 minutes generating a first impression of the page gave high ratings for expectations of finding good quality content (9) and being interested in the page (10). Relevance to the

individuals interests, of course, plays a major role in how long a user might stay on a particular page, as users are unlikely to continue to browse a page that they immediately find disinteresting. It may also take less time for a user to generate a first impression of a "bad" page than to generate a first impression of a "good" page. More research is necessary in order to explore this possibility in detail.

Another interesting observation was that the participants in this research study had a general skepticism toward organizations on Facebook, and were keenly aware and weary of when they were being advertised to. Participants that mentioned an aversion to advertising often stated that they disliked being sold to while on Facebook, or that advertising would often cause them to leave pages should they encounter it in a real situation rather than a research setting. This observation echoes what Vorvoreanu's (2009) finding about student perceptions of corporations on Facebook, which found that students had a general aversion to advertising on Facebook and viewed advertising as an "inevitable annoyance" (Vorvoreanu, 2009, pg. 77). One participant noticed a large image of a laptop product as the first "Status Update" on a page which caused him to think that the page was primarily for advertising. He stated that he would have likely left the page without reading any of its content, but because he was participating in a research study he continued to browse the page and eventually "Liked" the page after enjoying the content he saw. This sort of skeptical behavior was present in the behavior and comments of many participants. This echoes what Kent and Taylor (1998) suggested in adopting a dialogic approach to public relations on the Web, in that organizations should aim to provide information to their publics that is actually useful rather than operating as "propaganda, marketing, or advertising tools" (Kent & Taylor, 1998, p. 330).

Organizations on Facebook should take special care to approach their Facebook page from the perspective of their target audience.

One final summative observation about the participants in this sample was their ability to quickly make judgments about the overall tone and intended target audience of a page. Although many of the participants were scrolling quickly and only appearing to skim content, participants mentioned that they had determined which group of individuals the page was targeting based on the graphics they were using, the photos present, and the language that a page used. They were also able to make a judgment about the presence or lack of bias that a particular page might have. One participant stated that she was immediately able to determine that the page she was examining was aligned with her political interests by viewing a photograph of a prominent political figure that was accompanied with a short quote and some descriptive text. Participants that exhibited this skimming behavior mentioned that they primarily looked at pictures in "Status Updates" first, followed by reading the large, bold headline of a post. If those two elements did not catch their attention, they moved on to the next post.

The next section addresses the validity of the research methodology and the credibility of the researcher and potential issues of bias.

5.4 Validity and Credibility

The questions used in this research study were adapted from questions from Vorvoreanu's (2008) Website experience analysis research protocol. Only minor changes were made to the wording, such as adding the phrase, "based on this organization's Facebook page." Some relevant questions were also added to assess Facebook-specific characteristics and functions of Facebook pages, such as the question about the

participants' intent to "Like" a page. The questions were created in order to operationalize the organization-public relationship dimensions of trust, commitment, involvement, openness, and dialogue. As mentioned in the results section, participants rated the questions highly for their overall clarity and stated that they were easy to understand. By having two questions, one concerned with rating the participant's perception and one asking for supporting evidence, there is a degree of reinforcement to each dimension of interest. Furthermore, the interview structure of the research session allowed for participants to ask for clarification about the questions that were being asked. The researcher was also able to ask for clarification and probe for more explanation on behalf of the participants.

In terms of credibility, the researcher became intimately familiar with the data through watching the session videos, transcribing the fifteen sessions, reading all 160 pages of transcripts multiple times, extracting and collapsing emergent themes, and continuously referencing the data during the analysis process. The researcher included an abundance of quotes from participants in order to allow the data to speak for itself. It should also be taken into consideration that the researcher himself is a user of Facebook, a university student, and someone who has managed Facebook and other social media pages professionally for organizations. These factors have an impact on the research, and may enhance or detract from the overall validity of the study, depending on the reader's perspective. While the research attempted to ensure that the data and participant responses were prevalent and transparent in the writing, the researcher did have to make judgments about what things were important and ultimately decided what to include in the final writing without. In terms of authenticity, as described by Patton as "reflexive

consciousness about one's own perspective, appreciation for the perspectives of others, and fairness in depicting constructions in the values that undergird them," the researcher attempted move beyond his own attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and perceptions and instead focused on treating all participant responses equally, paying special attention to frequency and commonality of responses in the data as well as intensity or salience of certain responses and their impact on perceptions (Patton, 2001, pg. 546). As in all qualitative research studies, designing the study, conducting interview sessions, performing the analysis, and writing the results, discussion, and conclusion of this research study all have direct influence from the researcher.

It is worth reiterating again that the results of the study should not be generalized to all Facebook users or all social media platforms. University students with Facebook accounts were chosen specifically for this study in order to gain an understanding of how this particular community of individuals experiences the very particular setting of organizations' Facebook pages. The focus of the study was depth of understanding, rather than breadth of understanding and being able to apply the results to the entirety of the Facebook user population.

The next chapter is the conclusion of the research study. This chapter will discuss the project goals, how the study met those goals, the limitations of the study, and future directions for research.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

This research study set out to gain a better understanding of how university students experience Facebook pages of organizations and which interface elements affected their perceptions of the public relations dimensions of trust, commitment, involvement, openness, and dialogue. Facebook pages are becoming an increasingly prominent way for organizations to build and maintain relationships with their publics, which makes them an interesting and important topic for research in the fields of user experience and public relations. The study implemented an adapted form of a research protocol titled website experience analysis which allowed the researcher to map students' experiences with visiting Facebook pages across time and the space of the interface. The following sections discusses the project goals, the limitations of the study, and the potential for future research.

6.1   Project Goals

The primary goal of the research study was to gain a better understanding of how university students experience Facebook pages of organizations and which interface elements affected their perceptions of the public relations dimensions of trust, commitment, involvement, openness, and dialogue. This study was also an opportunity to prove the power and flexibility of this methodology in the setting of social media pages for organizations rather than public relations websites which it was originally developed

for public relations websites. Overall, using the Website experience analysis research protocol adapted for Facebook pages was a useful for understanding how this particular group of users' experience with a page occurs and for mapping specific interface elements to perceptions of public relations dimensions like trust, commitment, involvement, openness, and dialogue.

The results of the study display the ability for this method to produce useful insights about how experiences with Facebook pages unfold over the course of visiting an organization's page. From the creating a first impression, through the exploration phase, and finally through the process of exiting a phase, it became clear that there were common themes of participant responses and browsing behaviors among this group of participants. As the experience of visiting a Facebook page unfolded, different interface elements were cited as being influential in terms of gaining and maintaining a participant's interest, forming a first impression of a page, exploring a page, forming perceptions of trust, commitment, involvement, openness, and dialogue, and ultimately making the decision to like and leave a page. Despite the differences in public relations Websites and Facebook pages, Website experience analysis proved to be a powerful tool for this setting as well. Even though the study was successful, there were certain limitations inherent in the design of the study. The next section discusses these limitations.

6.2   Limitations

This study was limited by some of the necessary design decisions which revealed both strengths and weaknesses in the research. The observational interview format allowed for rich qualitative data to be collected and recorded, and the themes that

emerged during the analysis of this data produced helpful results and insights that could be useful for organizations using Facebook pages to reach and engage their audiences. However, the process of having an ongoing interview session while exploring a Facebook page made it difficult to replicate a natural browsing setting. This produced a somewhat unnatural process that participants went through due to the artificial setting in which the research was conducted. Participants were being asked questions about public relations dimensions during the exploration phase which caused them to stay on a page longer than they normally might have in a more natural situation. One strategy that the researcher used to circumvent this limitation was to ask participants to describe what they would normally do while visiting a Facebook page, and asking how long they would be likely to stay on the page in a more natural situation. Many individuals suggested that they would normally only spend a few seconds or minutes exploring a Facebook page, depending on their interest in the page and the relevance of the content. Participants also might have been hesitant to click articles and explore the organization's actual website, despite being told that they could do so. It should be noted, however, that there are other methods and ways of collecting information about how long individuals stay on Facebook pages and which links they choose to click. Website experience analysis adapted for this research situation provided valuable information about how students felt about certain interface elements and how those feelings affected the perception of the organization and the page they were visiting.

While not necessarily a limitation, it should be reiterated that this research focused on university students attending a large Midwestern university as the community of interest. Most of these students were from technology-related majors. Focusing on

gaining an in-depth understanding of a very specific group of individuals makes it difficult to generalize the results and apply them to other groups of individuals. The point of this research, however, was to gain a rich understanding of this particular group of individuals rather than to generalize the results broadly. In future research, it would be interesting to test this method another demographic in order to see if there are similarities between groups of people as they examine Facebook pages they are unfamiliar with.

Another potential limitation is that participants were unfamiliar with the "Like Pages" portion of the interface while choosing a page to examine. This obviously does not mimic the natural process that this group of individuals uses for finding a page on Facebook. Furthermore, some participants had a tendency to prefer pages of organizations that they were actually familiar with from previous interactions, rather than pages that they were not familiar with. However, like many of these limitations, this was a necessary and purposeful research design decision that was made to reduce the amount of influence that previous interactions with an organization had on the development of impressions and perceptions about organizations and their pages.

The next section discusses potential directions for future research and how to build upon what was learned from this research.

6.3   Future Research

This research study displays the potential that website experience analysis adapted for Facebook has for gaining a better understanding of how a group or community experiences organizational Facebook pages and perceives certain public relations dimensions. Future research could attempt to apply this research protocol to other social media, other forms of websites, other devices and platforms, or other communities of

individuals in order to contribute to the body of knowledge of public relations and user experience.

This research study chose to examine a variety of Facebook pages chosen at the participants' discretion using Website experience analysis, but it would also be interesting to select pages purposefully in order to determine how well certain pages are performing in terms of their publics' perceptions and their ability to build relationships with their publics. A single organization might also adopt this methodology in order to assess how their own page is performing, and could potentially make better use of the quantitative measures as well. Furthermore, research that compares and contrasts uses of Facebook pages within the different types or categories of organizations such as non-profit organization pages, news and media organization pages, consumer electronics organization pages, and more could be a potential area of interest. This direction of research would be valuable for determining best practices for different types of organizations utilizing Facebook's provided interface modules and elements in order to successfully build relationships with their publics.

As mentioned in the results section of this research study, the majority of the participants from this group of university students expressed that they overwhelmingly used Facebook on their mobile devices. Facebook (2015) reports that as of September 2015 there are 894 million mobile daily active users on average. Future research should almost certainly focus on how Facebook users interact with organizations on their mobile devices, and how the different interface layout of mobile devices might affect the experience of building a relationship with an organization on Facebook. With the flexibility of website experience analysis, it is very possible that incredibly interesting

and powerful insights could be generated from observing users exploring organizational Facebook pages on their mobile devices.

Furthermore, the flexible nature of the research protocol allows for other factors to be examined beyond the public relations dimensions of trust, commitment, involvement, openness, and dialogue. There are other potentially interesting dimensions from other fields that might be inserted into the research protocol. These are just a few possible directions for future research, and there are many more possibilities for research.

6.4   Chapter Summary

This chapter concluded the research study and discussed the project goals, how the study reached those goals, the limitations of the research study, and the potential for future research. The results from the study displayed the utility of the research protocol and contributed to gaining a better understanding of how university students experience organizational Facebook pages and the interface elements that had an impact on students' perceptions of the core organization-public relationship building dimensions of trust, commitment, involvement, openness, and dialogue.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A   Interview Researcher Memo, Process, and Questions

Perceptions of Organizations Using Facebook Pages - Researcher Sheet

Pre-Session Procedures

- o   Signed Consent Form?

- o   Given copy of Consent Form?

- o   Logged in to Facebook?

- o   Administer Pre-Test Questions

- o   Logged in to Facebook?

- o   Administer Pre-Test Questions?

Explanation of Research Study:

- o   "Thank you for participating in my thesis research study. I'm Joshua and I'll be moderating the research session today. For this research you'll choose an organization's Facebook page (that you are unfamiliar with) to examine and answer a series of questions about. At certain points during the session I'll ask you to assign ratings to these questions on a scale from 1-10, with 1 being "Very Bad" or "Not At All" or "Very Unlikely", and 10 being "Very Good" or "Very Much" or "Very Likely." You'll also be asked to provide examples to support your ratings. While you're exploring the organization's Facebook page, I'll ask you to think aloud about what you see and think about the page. During the study, I'll be recording the screen as well as your face using the laptop's web camera. These recordings are for note-taking purposes only, and will be deleted after the session has been transcribed. Do you have any questions at this point? If you're ready, I'll start the recording and we'll begin the session."

Beginning of Research Session – START SILVERBACK RECORDING

1. Please browse and select a page from the "Like Pages" option on the left sidebar in Facebook from and ORGANIZATION that you are NOT FAMILIAR WITH.

    o   Chosen page:

2. Why did you select this page? How did you make your decision?

    o   What aspects influenced your decision to select this page?

3. Please let me know when you feel as though you've had enough time to develop a

   first impression of this page.

4. What is your first impression of this Facebook page? Can you describe it?

    o   Very bad   1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10   Very good

    o   What aspects of the Facebook page influenced your first impression?

5. Do you expect to find good quality content on this page?

    o   Not at all   1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7– 8 – 9 – 10   Very much

    o   What aspects of the page make you feel this way?

6. Do you expect this page to be interesting?

    o   Not at all   1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7– 8 – 9 – 10   Very much

    o   What makes you say this?

Please continue browsing for a moment and continue to think aloud.

7. Do you feel as though this page maintained your interest?

    o   Not at all   1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7– 8 – 9 – 10   Very much

    o   What about the page makes you feel this way?

    o   List the things that maintained your interest:

8. Do you feel you can trust this organization based on their Facebook page?

    o   Not at all   1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7– 8 – 9 – 10   Very much

    o   What makes you feel this way?

9. Do you feel that this organization is interested in maintaining a relationship with you?

   o   Not at all   1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7– 8 – 9 – 10   Very much

   o   What about the page makes you feel this way?

10. Do you think this organization enjoys helping others?

   o   Not at all   1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7– 8 – 9 – 10   Very much

   o   What makes you feel this way?

11. Do you think that this organization is open about sharing information?

   o   Not at all   1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 – 8 – 9 – 10   Very much

   o   What on this website makes you feel this way?

12. Do you feel like this organization is interested in listening to what people like you have to say?

   o   Not at all   1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7– 8 – 9 – 10   Very much

   o   What makes you feel this way?

13. Overall, how do you evaluate this Facebook page?

   o   Not at all   1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7– 8 – 9 – 10   Very much

14. Please describe your overall opinion of this page. Please point out the aspects of the page which you base your opinion on.

15. How likely are you to "Like" this page?

   o   Not at all   1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7– 8 – 9 – 10   Very much

   o   What aspects influenced your decision?

16. Would you visit this Facebook page again?

    o   No, not likely   1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 – 8 – 9 – 10   Yes, very likely

17. The questions I had to answer about this Facebook page were:

    o   Very confusing   1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 – 8 – 9 – 10   Very clear

Perceptions of Organizations Using Facebook Pages - Pre-Interview Questionnaire

Age: _____

Gender (Circle one):

FEMALE   or   MALE

Education Status:

Freshman   Sophomore   Junior   Senior   Graduate

How long have you had a Facebook account??

_____

How much time do you spend on Facebook?

_____

How many Facebook friends do you have?

_____

How many Facebook Pages have you Liked?

_____

Overall, how much do you enjoy using Facebook? (Circle One)

I do not enjoy it   1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10   I enjoy it very much

Appendix C.   Research Participant Information Sheet
RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET
Perceptions of Organizations Using Facebook Pages
Mihaela Vorvoreanu, Ph.D, Associate Professor
Joshua Sarver, MS Student
Department of Computer Graphics Technology

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this research is to better understand how students perceive organizations using Facebook pages and what effect the different interface elements of Facebook pages have on perceptions of certain public relations dimensions.

What will I do if I choose to be in this study?

If you choose to be in this study, you will participate in a research interview while you choose and examine an organization's Facebook page. The researcher will ask you a series of questions about the Facebook page and your experience with it.

How long will I be in the study?

The research interview will last about 60 minutes.

What are the possible risks or discomforts?

There are no risks or discomforts beyond those encountered in everyday life.

Are there any potential benefits?

There are no benefits to you as an individual.

Will I receive payment or other incentive?

You will receive a $10 Amazon.com gift card for your participation.

If you feel you have been injured due to participation in this study, please contact Dr. Mihaela Vorvoreanu, mihaela@purdue.edu, (765) 496-7709, or contact Joshua Sarver, sarverj@purdue.edu, (765) 366-2007. You can also contact the Purdue Human Research Protection Program, irb@purdue.edu, (765) 494-5942. Purdue University will not provide medical treatment or financial compensation if you are injured or become ill as a result of participating in this research project. This does not waive any of your legal rights nor release any claim you might have based on negligence.

Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?

Yes. No one other than the researcher interviewing you will know that you participated in this research. We will ask for your permission to record the interview. The recordings will be stored safely on a password-protected, secured computer until they are transcribed. Once they are transcribed, the recordings will be destroyed. The transcripts will not have your name or any identifiable information. We will keep the transcripts until the end of the project, which is December 31, 2017. We will not disclose any personally identifiable information. We will create aggregate reports of the data that will be published in academic papers and conferences, but will not publish statements that can be traced directly to you.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, or, if you agree to participate, you can withdraw your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Who can I contact if I have questions about the study?

If you have questions, comments, or concerns about this research project, you can talk to one of the researchers. Please contact Dr. Mihaela Vorvoreanu, mihaela@purdue.edu, (765) 496-7709, or contact Joshua Sarver, sarverj@purdue.edu, (765) 366-2007. If you have questions about your rights while taking part in the study or have concerns about the treatment of research participants, please call the Human Research Protection Program at (765) 494-5942, email (irb@purdue.edu), or write to:
     Human Research Protection Program – Purdue University
     Ernest C. Young Hall, Room 1032
     155 S. Grant St.,
     West Lafayette, IN 47907-2114

Documentation of Informed Consent

I have had the opportunity to read this consent form and have the research study explained. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research study, and my questions have been answered. I am prepared to participate in the research study described above. I will be offered a copy of this consent form after I sign it.

_____

_____
     Participant's Signature   Date

_____
     Participant's Name

_____

_____
Researcher's Signature   Date