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"WHAT'S HAPPENING" @TWITTER: A USES AND GRATIFICATIONS APPROACH

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

“WHAT’S HAPPENING” @TWITTER: A USES AND GRATIFICATIONS APPROACH

The uses and gratifications approach places power in the hands of the audience and is a helpful perspective when trying to understand media usage, exposure, and effects. However, while the uses and gratifications approach has been applied regularly to traditional media, research explaining why people use new social media networks as well as the gratifications they obtain from them is scarce at best. This thesis provides a comprehensive overview of the uses and gratifications approach as well as the current literature about social media networks. An argument is built within the thesis to study Twitter as one social media network through the uses and gratifications theoretical lens. Research questions are provided and a survey of 216 college undergraduates was conducted. Results show that people use a variety of Twitter functions, that the gratifications sought from Twitter are not the gratifications obtained from Twitter, and that people are careful about the types of information they share on the social media network. Additionally, results suggest that Twitter users obtain more gratifications from the passive functions of Twitter rather the active functions in terms of relational maintenance and entertainment. Limitations of the study and suggestions for future directions are also provided.

KEYWORDS: Uses and Gratifications, Social Media, Twitter, Computer-Mediated Communication

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“WHAT’S HAPPENING” @TWITTER:
A USES AND GRATIFICATIONS APPROACH

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THESIS

Corey Ballard

The Graduate School
University of Kentucky

2011

“WHAT’S HAPPENING” @TWITTER:
A USES AND GRATIFICATIONS APPROACH

THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the
College of Communication and Information Studies
at the University of Kentucky

By

Corey Leigh Ballard

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Derek Lane, Associate Professor of Communication

Lexington, Kentucky

2011

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To my mother and father for their unwavering support

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Chapter One: Introduction

In today’s world, there is no doubt that social media networks are dynamically changing the way people share ideas and interact. Leading the social media charge are such sites as YouTube, Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter - which all allow people around the world to communicate in an entirely new way. As Brown (2010) notes, 90% of Internet users can name at least one social media network. Even though 500 million people are registered on Facebook and YouTube gets over 2 billion hits each day, scholars have still had a difficult time conceptualizing and understanding social media’s affect on society. The rapid growth and adaptation of these communication tools charge scholars with the daunting, time-consuming task of trying to understand specifically how these social media networks affect the world today. Not only is it important to distinguish the characteristics of successful social media networks like YouTube, Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter, but it is necessary to understand the failures and dysfunction of the social media networks that were merely blips on the radar (i.e. sixdegrees.com). Unfortunately, the literature and conceptual understandings of these social media are slow to develop due to evolving landscape of the technological world at large, the cultural lag of analysis and assessment that exists once a new social media emerges, and the ever-changing functions of these communication tools. New social media networks materialize often, each with a unique range of potential uses and possible gratifications

for their users and many that are being integrated with new communication technologies and mobile devices.

Twitter, one of the newest social media networks to successfully penetrate society, has revolutionized the way people communicate around the world. A social network site with micro-blogging capability, Twitter allows users to acquire or disseminate information instantly on its network while limiting all communication messages [known as “tweets”] to a meager 140 characters (Moody, 2010). Founded in 2006 by a Jack Dorsey, Evan Williams, and Biz Stone, Twitter became the communication tool it is today by essentially combining three existing technologies: a real-time delivery notification dispatch software invented by Dorsey, instant messaging, and text messaging. Twitter allows any of its users to contribute to the market of free ideas on its network and to share their interests, opinions and perspective about life and important societal or political events.

The company got its first big break in early 2007 when it won several awards at the South by Southwest Interactive Conference for Twitter’s blogging features. After the victory, usage of the up-and-coming social media network tripled within three days. The next several months saw dramatically increased interest in Twitter –largely due to the endorsements of celebrities and politicians. In late 2008, Twitter “sparked...tons of discussions on the Web [about] whether it offers more accurate and faster results and news as compared to Google” (Kerr, 2010). The citizen journalist potential surrounding Twitter at the time was another primary factor in the network reaching new heights, since users of the social media played an incredibly important role in covering world events like the United States Presidential Election, the Hudson River plane crash and MTV

Music Awards. Numerous examples like the ones listed above can be referenced as proof that founder Dorsey was onto something when he tweeted in 2007 that “one could change the world with one hundred and forty characters” (Kerr, 2010).

In 2008, Facebook offered Twitter \$500 million dollars to purchase the rights to the company but the buyout was denied by Twitter executives. By 2009, over 2.5 million tweets were sent each day. However, the ceiling of Twitter seems to be higher than anyone ever anticipated: the social media network’s popularity has grown exponentially over the past year and the number of daily tweets increased to 50 million in 2010 (Learmonth, 2010). Additionally, Twitter ranks as one of the world’s top ten most-visited websites according to the navigation web-analysis group Alexa (Alexa Homepage). Fueled by its chicness and utility, Twitter is continuing to grow at a rapid rate – acquiring over 300,000 new users from around the globe every day (Brown, 2010). By February 2011, JP Morgan assigned Twitter a \$4.5 billion dollar valuation (Gobry, 2011). On May 2, 2011, Twitter reached an entire new pinnacle in terms of usage and popularity. The death of Osama Bin Laden was actually first reported on the social network and the news of his death “saw the highest sustained rate of tweets ever” (Richmond, 2011). From 10:45pm – 2:20am ET, there was an average of 3,000 tweets per second, with the highest activity seeing up to 5,106 tweets per second.

Whether it be connecting with friends, sharing information with a mass audience, participating in a collective dialogue about a topic, or utilizing one of the countless other features of this social media network, Twitter empowers users to communicate in new, dynamic ways never before seen in today’s society. By examining the multiple uses for as well as the gratifications sought and gratifications obtained from the social media

network Twitter, this study aims to not only broaden scholars' understanding of a new social media outlet but also expand the scholarly community's scope of the uses and gratifications theory.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter begins with a historical overview of (a) the uses and gratifications theory; studies focused on (b) social media networks, (c) relevant new communication technologies, and (d) Twitter are also discussed. This chapter concludes with the (d) research questions that will be tested.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

The effects of mass media have been a controversial topic for scholars over the past century. With the rise of film and radio in the early part of the 1900's, communication researchers began to study what effects media messages have on those who receive them. The early inclination of research was focused on portraying media as a "hypodermic needle" that sent direct, standardized, and deliberate messages to an easily influenced mass audience in order to yield uniform effects (Hanson, 2008; McQuail, 2010). However, scholars who believed in the power of the audience to select and filter messages ultimately challenged the reigning ideology of the time and contested the widely accepted powerful-effects perspective society held regarding media messages. Herzog, Blumer, and Katz ultimately helped falsify the notion of this "magic bullet" direct effects approach and expanded our understanding of media use and media effects by introducing the uses and gratifications [U & G] theory.

"The uses and gratifications approach takes audience members' motivations for attending to mass media as its vantage point for understanding media exposure and effects" (Swanson, 1992, p.305). The U&G perspective is grounded in the admission that media messages are no longer considered to be directly or holistically received and

absorbed by consumers. Rather than focusing on the supremacy of the message being sent, this theory eliminates the idea of the passive, receptive audience and instead empowers receivers of the media to deliberately select which messages they are exposed to. This audience-centric approach to media effects was revolutionary at the time of its development and truly changed the way scholars looked at mass communication.

Although the roots of the uses and gratifications approach were planted before 1950, the perspective began to take the shape it reflects today in the second half of the twentieth century due largely to researchers Blumer and Katz (1974). As noted by Katz (1959), the conceptualization and expansion of the uses and gratifications theory during the mid-20th century allowed later researchers to explore what people do with media rather than what media do to people.

Proposing that media users are deliberate, active selectors of communication media, Blumer and Katz (1974) expanded Herzog's early idea of a receiver-driven approach to understanding media usage and messages. Katz and other scholars believed that uses and gratifications is grounded in the idea that users have certain reasons for selecting media and intentionally choose a certain message source that best fits their own personal needs. The theory proposes that audiences have numerous media options to choose from and suggests that the reasons for selecting a specific media will vary from user to user (Blumer & Katz, 1974). Drawing from McLeod and Becker (1981) and Haridakis and Whitmore (2006), U&G theory possesses five fundamental assumptions. Users of media must (1) be active and have (2) goal-driven media usage. The (3) media must possess the ability to fulfill a wide array of the users needs and the (4) audience must be cognizant of and capable of communicating the specific motives for media

selection and usage. Rosengren et al (1985) adds, “if audience members are to select from among various media and non-media alternatives according to their needs, they must have some perceptions of the alternatives most likely to meet those needs (p. 22). The theory also (5) highlights the importance of media content and exposure as well as the “context in which the exposure takes place” (Ancu & Cozmo, 2009, p. 569). A polar opposite to the idea of the direct effect “magic bullet” media message hypothesis, uses and gratifications believes in the free will of the consumer of communication messages (Harwood, 1999). After taking the idea of user free will into mind, Rosengren et.al (1985) noted that the strength of the uses and gratifications theory lies in its flexibility and descriptive power.

In 1984, McQuail presented the idea of “user taste” when examining the selection of media, which proposed that users select media based on personal preferences and that media are simply a means to reaching an end goal. During this time, researchers of uses and gratifications theory also introduced the idea of “media utility” and suggested that people are not only intentional when selecting which medias to consume, but they develop specific criteria and place subjective value judgments regarding the usefulness on each media as well. The idea of “media utility” was further developed and expanded into two sub-categories: social utility and personal utility (Barton, 2009). Barton (2009) proposed that media users seek to find medias that have personal utility and thus seek to “obtain gratifications on an individual or specialized level” (p. 474). However, social media networks like Twitter can perhaps posses both social and personal utility. They provide users with social capital and information that is useful for engaging in society as well as help gratify personalized needs.

Most early U&G studies examined the motives for selecting traditional media sources [newspaper, television, radio, film, etc.] as well as the gratifications obtained from utilizing each media. As technology continued to grow, different forms of media continued to emerge and challenge scholars' understanding of mass communication and the U&G theory. However, a recent search of the literature found that the field has expanded its understanding of the theory by incorporating video games, cell phones, the online world, and other new media into the U&G research. Scholars strengthened society's understanding of the theory even further when they expanded the concept of gratifications by differentiating between "gratifications sought" and "gratifications obtained" (Kink & Hess, 2008; Palmgreen, Wenner, & Rayburn, 1980). This extension of the theory suggests that whatever gratifications users *expect* to receive from a media may be different than what they *actually* receive. Further research showed that gratifications obtained are a better predictor of media use than gratifications sought and that if a medium meets or exceeds the gratifications sought by a user, recurrent use will occur (Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1979).

As Hanson (2008) remarks, in some cases the media message simply provides a venue for meaningful interactions, such as going to the movie theater on a date to know someone better or watching a sporting event to bond with friends. When assessing the research regarding U&G theory, one sees that the possible uses and gratification of media usage include opportunities for learning, relational maintenance, information seeking, companionship, arousal, relaxation, expression, entertainment, surveillance, intimacy, excitement, reinforcement, convenience, diversion, fantasy, status, immediate access, and routine (Greenberg, 1974; McLeod & Becker, 1981; Lueng & Wei, 2000; Ruggerio,

2000; LaRose & Eastin, 2004; Java et al., 2007; Lin & Tong, 2007; Reid & Reid, 2007; Kink & Hess, 2008; Ancu & Cozmo, 2009). Even though many of the aforementioned uses and gratifications exist within many different media, researchers must be careful not to generalize uses and gratifications and assume they apply to new social media. While some of the needs of users can be found in both traditional forms of media and newer, online-based social media, several scholars (Ancu & Cozmo, 2009; Ferguson & Perse, 2000) note that the online media fulfill certain needs differently as well as gratify unique needs sought by the user. As noted by Raacke & Bonds-Raacke (2008), “the Internet as a new tool in communication has changed the way people interact” and thus must be viewed as distinct and unique when compared to other media (p.167).

As Harwood (1999) suggests, studies of uses and gratifications have been done on an individual level (Rubin, 1993) as well as on an interpersonal level (Rosengren, Wenner, & Palmgreen, 1985). However, prediction of media usage using the uses and gratifications approach on the mass media level has been less concrete, with some researchers unable to strongly assert why certain media are utilized over others when using traditional approaches (Larose & Eastin, 2004; LaRose, Mastro, & Eastin, 2003). Mahatanankoon and O’Sullivan (2008) developed the Technology Acceptance Model which notes that media usage often depends on a variety of factors, including aesthetics, availability, reliability, cost, quality, ability for social influence, credibility, fun factor, playfulness, security, risk, and trustworthiness of the technology. With such a large number of factors coming into play, “the challenge remains to provide a more comprehensive explanation of media behavior than is forthcoming from the majority of uses and gratifications research” (LaRose, Mastro, & Eastin, 2003, p. 397). However,

further examining social media through this traditional communication lens is crucial in order for scholars to understand the ever-evolving uses and gratifications approach and the social media networks that people interact on around the world.

Uses and gratifications is a powerful mass communication theory that directly places power in the hands of the audience. Rather than assuming that media messages have direct, uniform effects on those who consume them, the U&G perspective proposes that receivers make deliberate, intentional decisions about the media messages they expose themselves to based on personal needs and desires. Further examination and testing of this classic theory, specifically in regards to social media, is crucial to development of the mass communication field.

Social Media Networks

Scholar's knowledge and conceptualization of social networks has been dramatically adjusted due to the digital age and the emergence of social media. With the growth of the Internet over the past decade, a large number of social media networks, where people can communicate and interact online, have surfaced. There is no doubt that social media has drastically changed the way the world communicates, connects, and conducts business (Moody, 2010). Since research (Quan-Hasse et al, 2002) shows that people are adopting multiple technological tools with complementary communication functions, understanding the role of social media in everyday interactions becomes increasingly important. Previous studies suggest that these communication tools and media are coexisting and providing unique gratifications to users, since communication tool integration is higher now than ever before (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010). Subsequently, a major literature deficit exists in analyzing social media since "peer-

reviewed published research evaluating the impact of these friend-networking sites on behavior is scarce at best” (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008, p.170).

Kaplan and Haelein (2010) conceptualize social media as “a group of Internet-based applications” with two distinct functions. These social media permit the constant adjustment of content and applications by “all users in a participatory and collaborative fashion” since they are grounded in “the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0” (p.61). Second, social media promotes the democratization of information and knowledge because they “allow for the creation and exchange of user-generated content” (p. 61). “With the rise of social media such as blogs, Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, and Youtube, users have become constantly connected and capable of interacting with one another. They share ideas, files, and risk messages on a real-time basis, which enables them to evade institutional control of information” (Ding & Zhang, 2010, p.80). Not only do social media provide users with a global audience, they are often inexpensive or free to use. Additionally, creating, sharing and editing content on social media sites is incredibly easy to do and occurs in real time. Communications Manager Jill Fletcher of Virgin America preaches the benefits of social media by saying that they allow people “to communicate much faster and more effectively” (Jones & Yu, 2010).

Previous research suggests that the gratifications sought from social media could be anything from a place for information distribution to a venue for feedback to a platform to promote organizations or even an opportunity to participate in a community of connected individuals (Stassen, 2010). As noted by Moody (2010), “social media can even be powerful tools for engaging, teaching and learning in the college classroom” (p.1). When specifically examining Facebook and MySpace, “very popular uses and

gratifications for having either account included “to keep in touch with old friends” (96.0%), “to keep in touch with current friends” (91.1%), “to post/look at pictures” (57.4%), “to make new friends” (56.4%), and “to locate old friends” (54.5%). Less commonly reported uses and gratifications included “to learn about events” (33.7%), “to post social functions” (21.8%), “to feel connected” (19.8%), “to share information about yourself” (13.9%), “for academic purposes” (10.9%), and “for dating purposes” (7.9%)” (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008, p.171). Additional gratifications obtained from Facebook usage include: killing time, affection, fashion, share problems, sociability, and social information (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010).

In addition to the uses and gratifications listed above, MySpace and Facebook users have been described as goal-driven in their social media use in the political world as well. Ancu and Cozmo (2009) were able to account for 69% of the variance of why people accessed political websites based on the gratifications obtained from visiting political candidates’ MySpace pages. They concluded that the gratifications sought were 1) a desire for social interaction, 2) information seeking and 3) entertainment. A similar study completed by Park, Kee, and Valenzuela (2009) found that 70% of the variance in joining a Facebook Group was accounted for by the following four gratifications that were obtained: socialization, entertainment, information seeking, and status seeking behavior. This study examined a group of 1,715 college students and the results yielded that Facebook Groups provide a pleasant experience for individuals who desire to participate in political or social events. Park, Kee, and Venenzuela (2009) also found that social media are often utilized to coordinate and discuss activities and civic engagement in the offline world. Interestingly, their findings highlight distinct differences in social

network usage and gratifications sought among underclassmen and upperclassmen. This data suggests gratifications sought from social media sites could vary significantly even among users who are only a few months apart in age. Both Facebook and Twitter use increased dramatically during the 2008 United States Presidential Election since both Barack Obama and John McCain used social media as a major part of their respective campaigns. On Election Day, social media signups were up 40.3% and profile updates increased 46% when compared to the previous Tuesday (Kerr, 2010). These studies suggest that social media are being used to create a more informed and engaged citizenry. However, while scholars have been able to get an idea of why people use Facebook and MySpace, these studies do not account for new developments on the sites (i.e. Facebook chat, marketplace). Additionally, extensive uses and gratifications research examining Twitter has not been conducted.

Social media users in one study were found to spend 1.46 hours a day managing their account and 1.10 hours a day viewing others' accounts (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008). These findings support that while maintaining one's own virtual image is important, surveillance of other people is an almost equally time-consuming use of social media sites. Additional research shows that the number of social media spectators (those who consume content) is maxing out at 70% while the percentage of creators (those who produce content) is growing (Bernoff, 2010). But, as noted by Quan-Haase and Young (2010) and Toffler (1980), the complexity of new media makes distinguishing between consumer and producer much more challenging. This fact has resulted in the creation of the term *prosumer* – which describe users' ability to take control over the production and distribution of content. Even though new social medias have become a topic of interest

over the past year, “it is still not clear how existing media will adapt to, or incorporate, the very diverse set of communication possibilities that continue to be developed on a trial-and-error basis in the media market” (McQuail, 2010, p.544). “In the new multimedia environment, audiences’ media use behaviors are becoming more complicated” (Jeong & Fishbein, 2007, p. 364). The above literature supports the assertion that an incredibly high number of people are using the Internet for social networking sites and new media for a variety of reasons and this topic should become a primary area of scholarly focus and research in the future.

Twitter

A self-proclaimed “real-time information network,” Twitter is “powered by people all around the world [and] lets them share and discover what’s happening now” (Twitter.com). Twitter’s aforementioned mission statement remains consistent with McQuail’s (2010) proposition that “mass media and society are continually interacting and influencing each other” (p.81). Whether it is a breaking international news story or informing people about a local traffic jam, Twitter essentially “hosts” a discussion on its network about any topic and allows users to analyze and share what is happening at that very moment. A popular culture phenomenon, there appears to be little resistance to the statement that Twitter is of “cultural interest (and) fashionable status because of the multiplicity of its functions as a news-gathering and marketing tool” (Ahmad, 2010, p.146). However, the various ways to use Twitter makes understanding the uses and gratifications of this specific social media site complicated. This fact is not helped by the deficit of strong, peer-reviewed research focusing on the network either.

For the purpose of this study, the different uses of Twitter have been outlined on a continuum – with one pole representing the most “passive” ways to use the media and the opposite pole being the most “active” ways. This author has distinguished the most passive functions as being spectator/surveillance related and the most active functions as being content creation driven. Table 2.1 below outlines this continuum:

Table 2.1: Representation of Active and Passive Twitter Functions

Active Functions	Passive Functions
Tweeting	Searching[^]
Tweeting and providing additional content	Following other users
Mentioning other users	Retweeting
Directly messaging other users*	Retweeting and adding additional content

* = most active, [^] most passive

All users of Twitter are active in the sense that they must sign up to use the social media network, but after the initial registration the degree of activity can vary substantially. In order to understand the multiple functions of Twitter, it is important to first understand what exactly a “tweet” is, even though creating one’s own original tweet is not a requirement of the network. For the purpose of this continuum, “tweeting” is identified as an active use of the social network. Sending a tweet is essentially when one creates a short message of 140 characters or less that is sent over Twitter’s network to all of the users [also known as “followers”] who have signed up to receive that person’s

tweets. This basic concept of Twitter should serve as a substantial foundation to describe the other ways to use the social media network.

Once registered, the most passive function of Twitter is “searching” the network. By typing in a topic, event, company, username, or person in the search bar, the user will be taken to a unique page that includes all discussions, links, and users related to the sought entry that are available on Twitter. The fact that there are over 600 millions searches on Twitter everyday suggests that one of the primary gratifications sought from the social media should be information (Brown, 2010). The search function, the most passive use of the media this author identified in this study, can primarily be utilized for information seeking behavior. Twitter users also have the ability to “follow” other Twitter accounts. A user can follow any company, friend, acquaintance, celebrity, or complete stranger on the network in order to receive all of that account’s future tweets. The “follow” function is also a passive function because it simply signs the user up to receive all future tweets from whatever account he/she selects to follow. These users may prefer to simply have access to and observe the creation of the “what’s happening” narrative without necessarily contributing to it.

Once a Twitter user decides to follow another account user, he/she will have the ability to “retweet” (or RT) that account’s tweets. For example, any user can simply “retweet” (without adding any original content) the tweet of another user in order to send that information to his/her own unique followers. This function is important because the numerous accounts followed by each user varies and messages can be passed forward beyond one’s own unique Twitter network. Kwak et.al (2010) analyzed just how fast and how far information sent over Twitter spreads through the retweet option. “A closer look

at retweets reveals that any retweeted tweet is to reach an average of 1,000 users no matter what the number of followers is of the original tweet. Once retweeted, a tweet gets retweeted almost instantly on the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th hops away from the source, signifying fast diffusion of information after the 1st retweet” (p. 600). This startling fact shows how fast and widespread information can be disseminated across this social network. Never before have such a large number of everyday citizens been empowered to reach such a large of an audience instantaneously. Users also have the ability to add their own content or commentary (that fits within the character limitations on the network) to any message they “retweet”. “Retweeting” with additional content is a slightly more active use of the media than simply “retweeting” because the user is adding additional content to the original message.

Tweeting is the next function on the continuum to be discussed. More active than simply following another user or “retweeting” existing content, tweeting is the complete creation of content which is then sent via a broadcast message to all of the user’s followers. As noted by one researcher, nearly 600 tweets each second are being sent from around the globe about an infinite amount of topics (Learmonth, 2010). Tweeting can simply be text-based or it can include additional links, photos, videos, or audio files. Providing an additional link or audio/visual clip to the text is identified as a very active way to use the media network since it connects the follower to additional content. The most active function identified by this author on Twitter is tweeting and sending it to a specific audience. Users can make sure their unique tweets reach specific users by “tagging” them in the tweet by utilizing the “@” sign in front of the desired receiver’s username. These pinpointed messages can be private [which is called a direct message] or

visible to everyone [which is called mentioning]. This function not only requires the creation of unique content but also the deliberate selection of intended receivers.

Twitter fits into several of the alternative models of communication proposed by McQuail (2010) regarding mass communication. The publicity model proposes that some users of media aim not to engage with others but instead aim to “catch and hold visual or aural attention” of spectators (McQuail, 2010, p. 72). Additionally, the reception model [where media encoders mold a message to get a certain reaction] relies on spectatorship and suggests that the presence of audience attention is more important than the quality of said attention. Other people may be more assertive in their use of the media and actively share information and tweets in hopes of garnering some sort of response [more followers, relationship building, successful marketing of products or a predetermined action from a follower]. With so many ways to obtain or send information on the network, it comes as no surprise that “web-based behavior is categorized into goal-directed and experiential styles based on differences in consumer motivation” (Dutta-Bergman, 2003, p. 264). This research suggests that Twitter could in fact occupy both styles – since users deliberately follow some “tweeters” and other information only touches the user’s peripheral route due to the “retweets” of others.

The various functions of Twitter and its integration into popular culture has resulted in the emergence of a phenomenon known as the “Twitter Effect” – which addresses the social media’s impact on society and culture. Twitter has not only affected the existing popular culture in society, but it has created its own culture as well. Terms and symbols like “RT” (retweet), “#” (to mark a trending topic), and “@” (to mention another user) are not only integral components of Twitter but have also infiltrated today’s

everyday vocabulary (Lin & Tong, 2007). By utilizing the “trending topic” feature of the website, tweeters are able to participate in a larger discussion about any topic of interest. By placing a hash-tag [#] on certain words in a tweet, users can connect to a forum that compiles all of the tweets that share an identical topic [and thus hash-tag #] in real time. Researchers have discovered that over 85% of the trending topics [which are the events on Twitter that are being discussed the most at a given moment] are closely related to headline news or persistent news in nature (Kwak et.al, 2010, p. 591). This statistic is useful because it suggests Twitter’s functions expand beyond just a social network and could potentially be used as an effective news outlet. Due to advertising restrictions in France, the words “Twitter” and “Facebook” are not allowed to be used on TV or radio (Jefferson, 2011). Twitter expanded the global trending topic function in late 2010 by also incorporating state and local trending topic forums as well for people to access more local news. Additionally, as noted by Goehler et.al (2010) and Moody (2010), one of Twitter’s strengths is its capability to be used in real time and provide links to larger news stories and websites.

A double-edged sword, Twitter and its trending topic function have been credited and blamed for successes and failures in film, television, music, and product industries at large due to the ability to spread information about a given topic at a quick speed.

“Twitter has become the campaign-management tool of choice, one that studios and other marketers can harness faster and to a greater extent as more case studies crop up on a weekly basis” (Hampp, 2009, p. 2). As 2011 Golden Globe host Ricky Gervais put it after the “Tittersphere” erupted following his opening monologue, “Twitter resembles the evolution of bacteria – where information just spreads rapidly” (Morgan, 2011).

Twitter has emerged as a virtual “word of mouth” media that has significant impact on companies, products, brands, and global communication. Additionally, Twitter users often trust third-party opinions about products without forming significant interpersonal bonds with them (Jansen et.al, 2009).

In regards to Twitter usage, research completed by Huberman, Romero, and Wu (2008) concluded that the number of friends (defined by at least two direct tweets) is a more accurate signal of usage than the number of followers (p.5). Ko, Cho, and Roberts (2005) also found that people are more likely to interact with the content itself than the producer of the content. In Twitter terms, this could explain why people are more likely to “retweet” a message to their followers rather than engage directly with the originator of the “tweet” itself. Additional research has shown through questionnaires and experiments that Internet users who are seeking knowledge are more likely to use a human-message interaction. Those who want a meaningful interaction however will resort to a human-human interface, as found on a social network (Ko, Cho, and Roberts, 2005). Interestingly enough, Twitter cannot be rigidly defined as solely a human-message or a human-human interaction media. This fact strengthens the case for examining Twitter further – people can regularly interact with other people or with content depending on what gratifications they desire from the communication media. Regardless of what or who people are interacting with, scholars note that social media has opened a new advertising frontier for companies and “a key goal of staking a claim in the social media space is to build a base of devoted followers who will keep coming back” (Jones & Yu, 2010).

Another one of Twitter's strengths is that it is an application that can be accessed from a computer, netbook, iPad or a mobile communication device. With so many ways to access the social media network, it is no surprise that Twitter's web platform is utilized by only 25% of its users, with the other 75% using one of the over 50,000 third-party applications for Twitter (Brown, 2010). Society's obsession with Twitter and the growth of the company over the past few years even resulted in the first ever "Chirp Conference" in April 2010 where developers from third-party Twitter applications were invited to come share information and talk about the future of the social media network (Gannes, 2010). Since a significant number of "tweeters" use mobile phones to access Twitter, understanding the appeal of certain communication technologies utilized by the social media is important. Previous research shows that some of the uses and gratifications of mobile phones include mobility, immediacy, and instrumentality and often vary according to an individual's occupational and social needs (Lueng & Wei, 2000). By being integrated with mobile phones, Twitter utilizes the gratifications of cellular devices that allow for real-time information updates and interactions among users.

Since Twitter is largely dependent on cell phone usage, it is important to consider the uses and gratifications of mobile phones and their text-based applications when examining the social media. Reid and Reid (2007) conducted a study that examined the different gratifications anxious and lonely people receive from using the Internet and mobile phones. Lonely participants preferred to communicate with others over the phone, while anxious people preferred the more text-based Internet when interacting. However, both groups listed their preferred medium as allowing for more intimacy than the alternative option and anxious users said texting on phones was more preferable than

talking on them. Additionally, these researchers uncovered the concept of the “brave SMS self” – where users are more likely to communicate more openly and disclose more information over a text-based application [like a short message system] than in a face-to-face interaction.

Riley et al (2008) found that mobile phones and text-based SMS applications could influence behavior as well. This study focused on behavioral changes of college students who were also cigarette smokers. The participants received anti-smoking text messages throughout the study with no additional experimental conditions. A large percentage of the students who received the anti-smoking messages did change their smoking behavior and several ultimately stopped smoking. The participants were post-tested and said that the text messages were an effective method in helping them quit. This is an important study for any text-based application research because it shows the potential power that these new communication technologies can possess in regards to behavioral adjustments. The above studies show that intimacy can be achieved through the communication technologies that Twitter utilizes [Internet and mobile phones]. Additionally, the existing research suggests that behavioral modifications can result from the usage of text-based applications. These findings are relevant to Twitter because the social media network began as an SMS-text based service, with more than 33% of its users accessing Twitter through mobile phones (Brown, 2010).

Similar to other media, uses and gratifications found in Twitter vary among groups and over time. The fact that diverse demographics utilize different media for certain reasons has been well researched with traditional media but not as much with newer social media (Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009). One relevant study concluded that

women are more likely than men to use text-based communication technologies to create new identities, while men are more likely to use it to exchange feelings with friends (Lin & Tong, 2007). One of the few Twitter gender studies correlates with these findings and notes that 56% of the people who tweet or update their Facebook status weekly are female (Bernoff, 2010). People who tweet or update their Facebook status at least once a week have been labeled by researchers as “conversationalists” in the online world. Of the people in this demographic, 70% are over the age of 30 and their household incomes are \$2,100 above the average online consumers (Bernoff, 2010). However, extensive research examining Twitter motives among different demographics has not been conducted.

In a sense, “tweeting” partially abides by the classic model of a mass media message, described by McQuail (2010) as a “one-directional, one-sided, and impersonal, (where) there is a social as well as physical distance between sender and receiver” (p.57). However, Twitter does allow receivers of messages to reply to messages directly, often resulting in a *public* dialogue between sender and receiver (in spite of the social and physical distance). Since these interactions are held in a public forum, one could examine Twitter through the lens of identity management and self-disclosure theories in the future as well. As noted by Reid and Reid (2007), Twitter possesses the text-based format and structure that may result in the emergence of a “brave SMS self” – where users are more likely to disclose more information through text-based mediums than in face-to-face interactions. “If you needed any more proof that Twitter has transformed how we absorb information and communicate, look no further than Kanye West” (Parr, 2010). As Parr (2010) puts it, Kanye West continued to show his own “brave SMS self” while embracing Twitter’s

ability to act as a canvas for his “stream of consciousness” ranting. Kanye shared his raw, unfiltered perspective with millions on Twitter and his social media usage is substantially credited for helping repair his public image after a string of unfortunate events in 2009.

Numerous businesses and companies around the world have also embraced Twitter. “Hotels, airlines, and other segments of the multi-billion dollar travel industry are aggressively tapping into social media, ramping up their use of online sites such as Facebook and Twitter to build loyalty to their brands” (Jones & Yu, 2010). The Hilton and Hyatt hotels each utilize Twitter as a virtual concierge for guests to interact regarding requests or questions about the services provided by the hotel. Southwest Airlines and Delta Airlines both have full time staff people with special Twitter training to help travelers deal with the chaos that comes with traveling (Severson, 2010; Jones & Yu, 2010). Twitter not only allowed “savvy travelers [the ability] to book new reservations, get flight information and track lost luggage...they can complain, too” (Severson, 2010). Research suggests that users of Twitter may also have a leg up on those who do not utilize the social media site at all: airlines have admitted in the press that “tweeters” are more likely to get immediate assistance over callers when facing travel difficulties (Higgins, 2010). With only 8% of online users currently utilizing Twitter, the social media is “still the domain of elite activist customers” (Severson, 2010).

Kentucky Fried Chicken used the buzz around Twitter to attract customers – the company is awarding \$20,000 to the high school senior who sends the best tweet to the KFC Twitter account. Any senior in the United States can win the four-year scholarship to college, which is judged on creativity, financial need, and personal drive, by sending a single tweet with the hash tag #KFCScholar (Horovitz, 2010). Twitter has also been used

for philanthropy in recent months as well. In November of 2010, a large number of celebrities participated in a “Digital Life Sacrifice” and agreed to sign off the social media platforms Facebook and Twitter until the charity Keep a Child Alive raised \$1,000,000. Led by singers Alicia Keys, Justin Timberlake, and Lady Gaga [who has over 7.2 million followers on Twitter – the most of any user], the “digital death” fundraiser was an abrupt way to get people’s attention, especially since celebrities have millions of followers on the social media networks (The Associated Press).

The above instances are just a few of the trending topics that occur on Twitter each day. Twitter also has the capability for *mediation*, which McQuail (2010) describes as the “relaying of second-hand [or third-party] version of events and conditions which we cannot directly observe for ourselves” (p.83). For example, the first major integration of Twitter into a primetime awards show occurred on September 12, 2010 at the MTV Video Music Awards. Over 3 million tweets were sent in a 24-hour period about the award show using the *#VMA* hash-tag (MTV, 2010). The *#VMA* trending topic established a venue for people to talk about the aspects of the awards show – performances, winners, losers, fashion, etc. People in attendance of the VMA’s could then interact with those who were watching from home or unable to watch at all to let them know what was going on with the show. This is just one example of how Twitter has emerged as a central hub for society to discuss events in real-time and allows tweeters to create a collective narrative about the world around them. The social network enables discussions about popular culture and other topics to occur in a “rapid, back-and-forth environment” (Bernoff, 2010). On a global scale, Twitter has been used to help create a mobilization effort to get a Berkley student out of prison in Egypt, document and

inform the world about the Iran elections, as well as provide information and support about the Haitian disaster relief (Ahmad, 2010; Parr, 2010). The perk of real time, rapid information exchange means Twitter can potentially be used for reporting news, sharing information, posing questions, holding discussions, and giving company/product feedback (Jansen et.al, 2009).

Unlike other social media networks (i.e. Facebook, MySpace) where relationships are reciprocal, Twitter allows for a one-way relationship between users [where one can follow someone else's tweets without that person following them back]. As mentioned previously, Lady Gaga has over 7.2 million followers, but only follows 146,000 people herself. Conan O'Brien, who has 2 million followers, only follows one person - a fan he selected at random. Once followed by O'Brien, this fan's followers increased from 3 to 16,000 in only 48 hours. "It is certainly an interesting experiment by Conan, and a great demonstration of how one little thing like following a person on Twitter can change so much" (Moore, 2010). Research has found that only 22.1% of Twitter relationships are reciprocal [where both people follow the other], compared to 84% on Yahoo's *360!* social network (Kwak et al., 2010). However, just because the majority of relationships are not reciprocal does not mean the social media network lacks interpersonal communication power. Research (Harley et al, 2007) shows that text-based applications on the Internet and on mobile phones [like Twitter] cannot only help negotiate the formation of new relationships but aid in the maintenance and refinement of existing ones as well. Some scholars credit the ability to strengthen relationships on Twitter to the network's capability to host and facilitate "frank and transparent conversations" (Parr, 2010).

Twitter has not been immune to growing pains over the last several years. Spam has become a huge issue on the media network and Twitter is actively trying to resolve these issues with the largest division in the company, the “Trust and Safety Unit”, leading the charge (Learmonth, 2010). Additionally, Twitter’s network crashes frequently and is often unable to be accessed due to the volume of users (Twitter.com). Additionally, Internet addiction and an obsession to create a virtual identity on social networks have contributed to increased examination of online media abuse (Song et.al, 2004). Twitter has also been dubbed as a social media that favors the “wordsmith” and can potentially be used for political leverage (Ahmad, 2010). Some scholars even note, “multiple user intentions have led to some users feeling overwhelmed by microblogging services” (Java, Finin, Song, & Tseng, 2007, p.64). Twitter being used as a journalistic tool and being incorporated in the legal process for information dissemination has met resistance as well (Goehler et.al, 2010). However, as Stassen (2010) notes, the global culture has changed drastically in the digital age and demands that people “reach beyond conventional mediums – newspapers, TV, and radio – to where the new audience is: in cyberspace” (p. 2). Advocates for Twitter say it could be utilized as a tool for journalists and can “increase transparency” in other important processes as well (Goehler et al, 2010, p.14). The company’s plans for the future include a “Places” application as well as strengthening Twitter’s international presence (Gannes, 2010).

Twitter’s rise into the forefront of society and popular culture over the past years has been significant and rapid. A social media with multiple functions, capabilities, and gratifications, Twitter is worthy of studying further because of its continuous integration into everyday life.

Research Questions

With its various functions, multiple arguments can be made on the primary uses and gratifications found from Twitter. As shown in the literature review, Twitter can be used for numerous reasons and could potentially provide several gratifications to its users – including social networking capabilities, microblogging ability, information dissemination, information seeking, relationship maintenance, news reporting, and advertising potential. The first research question determines which Twitter functions are being utilized most by its users.

R₁: How are Twitter users making use of its functions?

The second and third research questions explore the gratifications sought and gratifications obtained from Twitter. This is helpful for understanding what motives people have for using the social media network and also what satisfaction people get from the media. The scale used for these two research questions will be a modified version of Sheldon's (2008) Facebook motives scale and Flaherty, Pearce, and Rubin's (1998) scale for motives/uses of Internet communication.

R₂: What are the perceived gratifications sought by Twitter users?

R₃: What gratifications are obtained by Twitter users?

The literature and previous research show the ability to achieve intimacy through communication media networks like Twitter. This is primarily accomplished through self-disclosure and open information sharing. The fourth research question seeks to examine whether or not the "brave SMS self" introduced by Reid & Reid (2007) is present on Twitter. Specifically, this question explores whether or not people disclose

personal information on Twitter. This question would use Rosenfield's (1979) self-disclosure scale.

R₄: What types of information are people likely to disclose on Twitter?

Drawing from McQuail's (2010) publicity model, the fifth research question explores whether Twitter users are more likely to perceive greater gratification from the passive uses of the social media than from the active uses.

R₅: Do Twitter users perceive greater gratifications obtained from passive usage rather than active usage?

This chapter began with a comprehensive overview of the uses and gratifications approach in the social science field. Social media networks, new communication technologies, and Twitter were also discussed and examined to shape a rationale for this study. The research questions were presented at the culmination of this chapter in order to pave the way for Chapter Three – which is focused on Methods.

Chapter Three: Methods

In order to answer the research questions presented at the end of Chapter Two, a cross-sectional, self-administered survey was developed (see Appendix A). This chapter provides a description of the general methods that were used. It includes information pertaining to: (a) subjects, (b) research design and (c) measures.

Subjects

Participants for this survey were all acquired from the same southern university. Examining college students is appropriate because, as the Pew Research Center noted in 2002, college students “demonstrate” an especially heavy reliance on the Internet for social interaction and fun activities (LaRose & Eastin, 2004, p. 364). Additionally, Quan-Hasse and Young (2010) found that university students are early adopters of social networking sites. Since little knowledge is known about gender usage of Twitter, this study asked participants to classify themselves as male or female. The age of the subjects in this study limited were limited to 18 – 24 year old university students in lower-division communication courses. Since students enrolled in lower-division communication courses come from a variety of majors across campus, the majority of the sample was likely to represent the demographic breakdown of the university as a whole. The sample was a non-random, convenience sample due to the availability of the participants as well as the likelihood that this demographic utilizes the social media networks as discussed in the literature.

An online survey of 17 participants was administered as a pilot study. Feedback was acquired from all participants and minor adjustments were made to the survey. For the actual study, 225 participants completed the survey. 9 subjects were eliminated from

the sample based on incomplete data, leaving the total sample for this study at 216. Of the examined sample, 92 of the participants were male (42.6%) and 124 were female (57.4%). Participant age range was 18 - 25. The majority of the sample were either 18 or 19 (n = 105, 48.6%). 39.4% (n = 85) of the participants were between 20 – 21 years of age and 12% of the sample (n = 26) were between 22 – 24 years of age. None of the sample (n = 0, 0%) listed their age at 25.

Of the sample, 81 participants were freshman (37.5%), 64 participants were sophomores (29.6%), 41 participants were juniors (19%), and 30 participants were seniors (13.9%). The majority of participants were White (n=190, 88%). Of the remaining participants, 12 (5.6%) were Black/African American, 12 (5.6%) were Asian/Pacific Islander and 2 (0.8%) were Hispanic.

Research Design

Subjects were asked to complete an online, cross-sectional, self-administered survey. The participants were given nine days to visit the link and complete the survey (specific dates of this data collection were 3/22/2011 – 3/31/2011). Participation was voluntary and Qualtrics was used to host the survey. Subjects who did not take the survey were not penalized, but those who participated were given extra credit in their communication classes as an incentive. The survey also stated that respondents' answers were completely anonymous and that by filling out the survey, they consented to the use of their answers in the data set. There was no cost for subjects to participate and no personal information (other than demographics) was asked, so both privacy and confidentiality were protected. While survey completion was not be supervised or proctored, Internet access and computers were available resources in the College of

Communication and Information Studies and other university locations. The design for the study was approved by the Department of Communication at the university where the study was conducted and was submitted to the Institutional Review Board for approval (09-0601-P4S).

A survey is the appropriate method for this study because it allows for the largest number of participants to partake in the study because of its low cost and minimal time requirement. Survey data, a traditional method used for U&G studies, allows for a holistic understanding of the uses and gratifications of Twitter as well as provide information about how people use social media sites differently. Both forced choice and open-ended survey questions were asked. (To view survey script, please see Appendix A).

Measures

Social Media Familiarity and Usage: A 5-point Likert scale was used to assess participants' familiarity with social media networks (such as YouTube, Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter). Participants reported their agreement on the scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). No modifications of this scale were necessary.

Additionally, participants were asked to share the number of hours in an average week that they use social media networks (answers could range from zero hours each week to 40 hours per week). In regards to the reasons for general social media usage, participants could select any of the following motivations: getting information, entertainment, networking, meeting new friends, seeing what my friends are doing, passing the time, or sharing information about myself.

General Twitter Results: Two questions were asked to participants about the social media network Twitter – both in terms of their familiarity and usage. A 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) was used to assess participants' agreement with the statement "I am familiar with the social media network Twitter". After asking whether or not survey participants were registered Twitter users, this survey also sought out to see how often people accessed Twitter. A new measure of Twitter results was created for the current study. A 9-point scale was used for this question and items were as follows: 0 = "rarely," 1 = "monthly," 2 = "once a week," 3 = "several times a week," 4 = "once a day," 5 = "2-4 times a day," 6 = "5-8 times a day," 7 = "9-12 times a day," and 8 = "more than 12 times a day."

Use of Twitter Functions: The first research question examined how Twitter users utilize the specific functions of Twitter. A list of primary Twitter functions was presented (searching, following other users, retweeting, retweeting and add additional content, tweeting, tweeting and providing content, mentioning other users, and directly messaging other users). "Additional content" is defined as providing extra media (photos, video, audio) or links (URLs) to a retweet or tweet. The scale used for this question was created for this study. A six-point scale was used for this question (0 = "never," 1 = "weekly," 2 = "1 time a day," 3 = "2-4 times a day," 4 = "5-9 times a day," and 5 = "10+ times a day.") This scale has a reliability of 0.899.

Gratifications Sought and Gratifications Obtained from Twitter: The second research question examines the gratifications sought by Twitter users, while the third research question examines the gratifications obtained by Twitter users. The gratifications sought and gratifications obtained were measured using modifications of

both the Sheldon (2008) and Flaherty, Pearce, and Rubin (1998) scales. The identified gratifications are as follows: relationship maintenance, passing time, entertainment, coolness, information seeking, and expression. For research question two, 25 motives of Twitter use were presented to participants and they were asked to identify which they used. For research question three, twelve incentives (gratifications obtained) for using Twitter were presented to participants and they were asked to identify which ones were reasons for their Twitter use. Table 3.1 shows the reliability and alpha's of each item.

Table 3.1

Reliability (α) of Gratifications Sought and Gratifications Obtained Scales		
Gratifications	GS Scale	GO Scale
Composite Scale		
Gratifications Sought (n=25)	$\alpha=.892$	
Gratifications Obtained (n=12)		$\alpha=.892$
Relational Maintenance		
GS (n=6; q1, q7, q13, q19, q22, q25)	$\alpha=.738$	
GO (n=2, q1, q7)		$\alpha=.786$
Passing Time		
GS (n=3; q2, q8, q14)	$\alpha=.583$	
GO (n=2; q2, q8)		$\alpha=.559$
Entertainment		
GS (n=5; q3, q9, q15, q20, q23)	$\alpha=.708$	
GO (n=2; q3, q9)		$\alpha=.867$
Coolness		
GS (n=3; q4, q10, q16)	$\alpha=.569$	
GO (n=2; q4, q10)		$\alpha=.643$
Information Seeking		
GS (n=5; q5, q11, q17, q21, q24)	$\alpha=.627$	
GO (n=2; q5, q11)		$\alpha=.776$
Expression		
GS (n=3; q6, q12, q18)	$\alpha=.776$	
GO (n=2; q6, q12)		$\alpha=.632$

* All GS items come from question 18 on survey script

** All GO items from from question 19 on survey script

Self-Disclosure on Twitter: The fourth research question focused on what types of information people are most likely to share on Twitter as well as participants' level of discretion about sharing personal information. Participants were asked whether or not they shared information about various topics on Twitter. The topics were as follows and participants checked which types of information they share on Twitter: alcohol use, drug use, romantic relationships, friendships, sex life, social activities, work life, interests/hobbies, religion, sports interests, political views/opinions, and life problems. This scale was created for the current study. Additionally, a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) was used to assess participants' response to the statement "I am cautious about the information I share on Twitter and other social media networks".

Gratifications Obtained: Passive vs. Active Functions: The fifth research question examined whether or not Twitter user obtained greater gratifications from the passive uses of Twitter rather than the active uses of Twitter. As discussed in Chapter Two, this study separates Twitter functions into two categories: active uses and passive uses (see table 2.1 for breakdown of Twitter uses). This question sought to examine if users of Twitter obtained greater gratifications from the passive uses of the network rather than the active uses. Independent samples t-tests were used to see which gratifications (relational maintenance, passing time, entertainment, coolness, information seeking, and expression) were obtained through passive uses of the media network.

This chapter presented the sampling characteristics, research design, and specific measures for this study. Data gathered from the survey will be presented and interpreted in chapter four.

Chapter Four: Results

This chapter includes the results from the survey. A correlation matrix of each of the gratifications sought and obtained is presented in Table 4.1 on the next page, followed by a general analysis of general social media familiarity and usage and a description of Twitter familiarity and usage. Finally, results for each of the five research questions are provided.

Table 4.1 Correlation Matrix

	GS_RM	GS_PT	GS_EN	GS_CO	GS_IS	GS_EX	GO_RM	GO_PT	GO_EN	GO_CO	GO_IS
GS_PT Pearson's r	.427**										
GS_EN Pearson's r	.602**	.623**									
GS_CO Pearson's r	.376**	.468**	.560**								
GS_IS Pearson's r	.376**	.393**	.460**	.327**							
GS_EX Pearson's r	.594**	.468**	.576**	.472**	.449**						
GO_RM Pearson's r	.755**	.390**	.554**	.376**	.270**	.519**					
GO_PT Pearson's r	.313**	.530**	.466**	.343**	.205**	.222**	.318**				
GO_EN Pearson's r	.358**	.478**	.573**	.547**	.262**	.435**	.354**	.312**			
GO_CO Pearson's r	.343**	.249**	.398**	.623**	.198**	.321**	.299**	.233**	.275**		
GO_IS Pearson's r	.320**	.361**	.415**	.181*	.715**	.442**	.193*	.166*	.234**	.102	
GO_EX Pearson's r	.624**	.499**	.561**	.410**	.492**	.656**	.587**	.349**	.339**	.357**	.490**

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

Social Media Familiarity and Usage: Participants' response to their familiarity with social media networks (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) yielded a mean of 4.75 (SD = .573). Participants also answered one question about their amount of usage (in hours) of social media networks. The mean number of hours spent on social media networks was 14.41 (SD = 8.79). The most frequent response for one's reason motives for using social media was "passing the time" and this answer was given by 91.7% (n=198) of participants. This response was followed by "seeing what my friends are doing" (91.2%, n=197), entertainment (87.5%, n=189), getting information (76.9%, n=166), networking (64.8%, n=140), sharing information about myself (38.9%, n=84), and meeting new friends (25.5%, n=55).

General Twitter Results: Participants' responses regarding familiarity with Twitter (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) yielded a mean of 4.07 and a standard deviation of 1.108. Of the 216 participants who took the survey, 64.4% (n=139) identified themselves as Twitter users and 35.6% (n=77) said they were not Twitter users. Of the 139-registered Twitter users, 86 participants (65.2%) said they accessed Twitter at least once a day. When asked how often they access their Twitter account on the 9-point scale discussed in Chapter Three (p. 36), users responded with a mean of 4.55 (SD = 2.571).

Use of Twitter Functions (RQ1): The first research question examines the Twitter functions that were reported as those being used most frequently. A six-point scale was used (0 = “never,” 1 = “weekly,” 2 = “1 time a day,” 3 = “2-4 times a day,” 4 = “5-9 times a day,” and 5 = “10+ times a day”) to assess how people are using functions of Twitter. Responses ranged from 0 (never use) to 5 (more than ten times per day) with most functions occurring less than four times per day. Table 4.2 provides descriptive statistics for each of the eight Twitter functions (with the most prevalent listed first). Clearly, participants in the current study prefer active functions with tweeting being most preferred followed by mentioning other users. However, participants did not prefer direct messaging as a useful function for Twitter.

Table 4.2

Descriptive Statistics Associated with Twitter Functions (descending means)

	n	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
tweeting*	139	0	5	2.37	1.580
mentioning other users*	139	0	5	1.99	1.518
following other users^	139	0	5	1.75	1.240
retweeting^	139	0	5	1.51	1.287
tweeting & providing additional content*	139	0	5	1.46	1.471
searching^	139	0	5	1.31	1.020
retweeting & adding additional content^	139	0	5	1.19	1.322
direct messaging others*	139	0	4	.57	.869

* = active function; ^ = passive function

Gratifications Sought (RQ2): The gratifications sought from Twitter were assessed to answer research question this research question. The results, presented in Table 4.3 in standard z scores, shows the distribution of motives Twitter users reported as important. Entertainment and passing time emerge as the two primary gratifications sought from Twitter users, with information seeking and coolness as the least sought motives.

Table 4.3

Descriptive Statistics for Gratifications Sought from Twitter (descending means)

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
Entertainment	139	.00	1.00	.6719	.29489
Passing Time	139	.00	1.00	.6379	.33208
Expression	139	.00	1.00	.4149	.40892
Relational Maintenance	139	.00	1.00	.4089	.30245
Information Seeking	139	.00	1.00	.4014	.29635
Coolness	139	.00	1.00	.3501	.31425

Gratifications Obtained (RQ3): Using standard z scores to represent the different types of satisfaction one gets from Twitter, the results in Table 4.4 reveal the specific gratifications participants obtained. Entertainment and relational maintenance emerged as the two primary gratifications obtained from Twitter users, followed closely by information seeking. Passing time and expression dropped from the top three gratifications sought (RQ2) to the bottom three gratifications obtained.

Table 4.4

Descriptive Statistics for Gratifications Obtained from Twitter (descending means)

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
Entertainment	139	.00	1.00	.7626	.36777
Relational Maintenance	139	.00	1.00	.6043	.41474
Information Seeking	139	.00	1.00	.5971	.41650
Passing Time	139	.00	1.00	.5144	.34548
Expression	139	.00	1.00	.3921	.38899
Coolness	139	.00	1.00	.2806	.37646

Self-Disclosure on Twitter (RQ4): All 139 Twitter users were asked to identify which types of information they share on Twitter and which types of information they share in face-to-face conversations. Table 4.5 provides a description of the types of information Twitter users share on Twitter, while Table 4.6 provides a description of the types of information Twitter users share in face-to-face conversations. A 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) was used to assess participants' response to the statement "I am cautious about the information I share on Twitter and other social media networks". Results yielded a mean of 4.25 (SD = .835). This finding suggests that people are very deliberate and careful about the types of information they share on social networks.

Table 4.5

Descriptive Statistics for the Types of Information Shared on Twitter

Type of information shared on Twitter	N	%
About my social activities	84	60.4
About my sports interests	84	60.4
About my interests and hobbies	79	56.8
About my friendships	65	46.7
About my work life	44	31.6
About my religion	34	24.4
About my political views and opinions	32	23.0
About problems in my life	30	21.5
About my alcohol use	28	20.0
About my romantic relationships	25	17.9
About my sex life	7	5.0
About my drug use	6	4.3

Table 4.6

Descriptive Statistics for Types of Information Shared Face-to-Face

Types of Information shared face-to-face	N	%
About my social activities	106	76.2
About my friendships	105	75.5
About my interests and hobbies	99	71.2
About my sports interests	96	69.0
About my romantic relationships	96	69.0
About problems in my life	94	67.6
About my work life	88	63.3
About my religion	81	58.2
About my alcohol use	77	55.3
About my political views and opinions	76	54.6
About my sex life	57	41.0
About my drug use	26	18.7

Gratifications Obtained: Passive vs. Active Functions (RQ5): This question examined whether or not Twitter users obtained greater gratifications from the passive uses of Twitter than from the active uses of Twitter. The groups were formed by analyzing the top three most utilized Twitter functions of each participant. If two or more of the most utilized functions were identified as active (see Table 2.1 for breakdown of functions), then that user was grouped into the “Active Group”. If two or more of the most utilized functions were passive, then that participants would be part of the “Passive Group.” An independent samples t-test was run for the results. The table below reveals that Twitter users perceived greater gratifications obtained from the passive uses of the social media network in regards to both relational maintenance and entertainment.

Table 4.7

Descriptive Statistics and Independent Samples t Test Results for Gratifications Obtained

	Group type	Mean	SD	t (df)
Relational Maintenance	Passive	.6964	.36530	
	Active	.3854	.44050	3.88 (91.56)*
Passing Time	Passive	.4911	.32321	
	Active	.5208	.38535	-.428 (102) ns
Entertainment	Passive	.8393	.30312	
	Active	.6354	.43442	2.73 (82.183)**
Coolness	Passive	.3393	.39436	
	Active	.2188	.34062	1.654 (102) ns
Information Seeking	Passive	.5714	.42027	
	Active	.6250	.41897	-.649 (102) ns
Expression	Passive	.3839	.40442	
	Active	.2708	.34144	1.526 (102) ns

**p < 0.01; *p<0.05; ns = not significant

This chapter provided survey results about general social media usage and familiarity, Twitter use and familiarity, and the five research questions. Chapter 5 discusses these results and provides suggestions for improving the study and possible future directions of related research.

Chapter Five: Discussion

The following chapter interprets the results of this study; a critical discussion of limitations is also included. Potential directions for future research are also discussed.

Implications

As social media networks continue to grow, evolve, and emerge in today's world, studies like this one become crucial to scholar's understanding of how people communicate in new, dynamic ways. One goal of this study was to discover participants' general familiarity with social media networks like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. The results found in this survey show that subjects are very familiar with social media networks ($M = 4.75$, $SD = .573$). Additionally, this study's participants responded that they are spending an average of 14 hours each week on social media networks. This aligns with the existing literature (Brown, 2010) about people's solid familiarity with social media networking sites and is very close to the 17 hours a week of social media usage that Raacke and Bonds-Raacke (2008) estimated in their previous research. The fact that participants are spending an average of 14 hours (of a possible 168 hours) of any given week on social media networks provides a strong rationale for why this is an incredibly important topic of interest for scholars to study.

Two questions were asked in this survey about participants' familiarity with Twitter and usage patterns. Subjects noted that they were very familiar with Twitter ($M = 4.07$) and 64.4% of the sample ($n = 139$) identified themselves as registered Twitter users. This provides substantial support to the argument that Twitter is becoming a major player in the social media and technological world. 65.5% of the registered Twitter users ($n=86$) noted that they access the social media network at least once a day which suggests

it has significantly integrated itself into the daily lives of many of its users. Not only were survey participants familiar with the social media network, those who were registered users responded that they use Twitter functions very differently.

RQ1 examined how participants were using Twitter. The fact that tweeting was the most utilized function comes as no surprise, since Learmonth (2010) discovered that there were over 47.5 million more tweets sent in 2010 than there were in 2009.

“Tweeting” appears to be the most utilized function of the social network, which suggests that content creation is the primary appeal of Twitter. This supports Bernoff’s (2010) claim that the number of message/content producers continues to rise on social media networks, while the number of spectators continues to decline. Additionally, since “tweeting” is an active function of Twitter, it supports the claim that one of the appeals of social media is for the audience to take an active role in message creation.

The most utilized passive functions of Twitter found in this study were “following other users” and “retweeting”. These findings suggest that not only is receiving the tweets of others a major appeal of Twitter, but sharing those tweets with one’s own follows is important as well. As noted by Kwak et al (2010), the retweet function on Twitter has significant strength in regards to message dissemination, with an average retweet reaching 1,000 users. While Ding and Zhang (2010) suggest that the ability to share files and content is a major draw to social networks, this does not seem to be strongly supported by the results found in this study. Sharing additional content (photos, video, audio, links, etc) with either a tweet or retweet was not a regularly used function of Twitter and occurred less than once a day for most users.

Ko, Cho, and Roberts (2005) argue that Internet users are more likely to interact with content rather than people on Twitter, a finding that is not supported by the results of this study. "Mentioning other users" was identified as the second most utilized function of Twitter, which suggests that public interactions and communication among Tweeters is a major part of the social media network. However, direct messaging - which was identified as the most active Twitter function due to the fact it involves creating content, pinpointing a specific audience, and communicating in private - was used less than once a week. This finding suggests that Twitter users do not resort to the social media network for private conversations regularly.

This study supports the theoretical claims of the U&G theory, since the gratifications a user seeks from Twitter is likely to be different from the gratifications the user obtains from the network. As seen in RQ2, the top three gratifications sought from Twitter were "entertainment," "passing time," and "expression". However, RQ3 notes that the top three gratifications obtained from Twitter from the same participants were actually "entertainment," "relational maintenance," and "information seeking". What is interesting about these findings is that while people may register for Twitter to pass time and for expressive reasons, they are not obtaining those gratifications from the social media network. These findings suggest that Twitter users actually obtain more opportunities to manage their relationships than they anticipate they will on Twitter. After taking these results into consideration and comparing them to the current literature (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008), one can infer that while social media users *think* that Facebook provides them a better opportunity to manage existing relationships than Twitter, Twitter users are actually obtaining more gratifications in regards to relational

maintenance than they are expecting. Additionally, Twitter users actually obtained more gratifications in regards to information seeking that they sought, which suggests that Kerr (2010) may be correct when he asserts that Twitter offers more information in less time than traditional search engines. This leads one to believe that Twitter serves not just as an information-based social media network, but that it possesses substantial relational power as well. However, this finding is interesting since Twitter users ranked “information seeking” fifth in the gratifications sought category.

RQ4 addressed the types of information people are likely to disclose on Twitter. The literature, mainly Reid and Reid (2007), suggested that people are more likely than not to share personal information on text-based applications (like Twitter). However, this claim in the literature was not completely supported by the findings in this study. Twitter users are much more likely to share information about their personal hobbies, interests, and activities rather than their religious/political beliefs, drug/alcohol behavior, and romantic/sexual relationships. Twitter users are much more likely to share information in face-to-face conversations rather than on the social media network. Additionally, participants responded that they are very careful about the types of information they share on Twitter and other social media networks. While this study does not support the literature, it is not necessarily surprising. The large “reach” and power of social media networks continues to surprise society – resulting in the emergence of private accounts, “blocked” lists, and privacy controls. With the potential for a single tweet or Facebook post to reach thousands, it is easy to understand why people are very deliberate and careful for what they share on Twitter. Perhaps the most poignant examples come from the termination of comedian Gilbert Godfried’s multimillion-dollar contract with Aflac,

Inc. for his inappropriate tweets about the Japanese Tsunami in early 2011 and the “TwitPic Scandal” featuring Republican Anthony Weiner in June 2011. As with any communication tool, scholars and everyday citizens alike need to be cautious when using Twitter. It is important to make sure accounts are protected from hacking and that the social media network is not manipulated or abused. Additionally, Twitter users should be critical consumers of data and make sure they are not accepting all “tweets” as absolute truths.

The fifth research question examined whether or not Twitter users obtained greater gratifications from the passive uses of the social media network than the active uses. Those users that were identified as “passive” obtained greater gratifications than “active” users in regards to relational maintenance and entertainment. There were no significant differences between passive and active users in terms of passing time, information seeking, expression, and coolness. This finding is not unexpected, since one can assume that the passive functions of Twitter (specifically following other user’s tweets) would result in not only entertainment but increased knowledge about one’s friends and social circle.

This study is of value because it supports classic uses and gratification theoretical claims and assumptions. As seen in RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3, Twitter users were each using the social media network’s functions differently - for a variety of reasons and motives. This supports the classical claims that the audience is empowered to use media different ways for their own unique reasons (Blumer and Katz, 1974; Swanson, 1992; McQuail, 2010). Haridakis and Whitmore (2006) and McLeod and Becker (1992) assert that a core assumption of the uses and gratifications theory is that media users must be “active”.

This is supported in this study since all Twitter users are “active” in a sense that they took the steps to register and create an account on the social media network. However, once they are registered, their activity can vary and they can be more passive users of the social media network. Additionally, even if users utilize only the passive functions of Twitter, their behavior will still be goal-driven, which is another assumption of U&G theory.

Limitations

As with every study, this exploratory study has limitations. However, this study is valuable in the sense that it asks and answers important questions about social media networks and Twitter. The sample for this study – undergraduate college students - represents a limited population that differs greatly from the general population in society. While undergraduates are an incredibly important sample to study in regards to the Internet and social media as discussed by LaRose and Eastin (2002), college students typically have severely different lifestyles than the general public at large. The self-selecting, convenience sample used in this study could be improved by expanding to include other demographics to create a larger, more diverse sample.

Additionally, there are aspects of this study in regards to the design that could be improved. By relying on students to complete the survey independently online, external distractions could come into play. The results could vary if the survey was conducted in a laboratory setting and if survey completion was supervised and administered by a proctor. Additionally, only six gratifications were examined in this study. Lastly, nominal/ordinal data was used for RQ2 and RQ3. By adjusting this to interval data in the

future, scholars could attain a better understanding of the gratifications sought and gratifications obtained from Twitter.

Future Directions

Social media will continue to grow and develop as long as there continues to be a market for these new communication networks. As these social media networks continue to evolve, the gratifications people seek in them as well as the gratifications they obtain from them will change also. There will always be new opportunities for scholars to examine how communication processes change and evolve.

Future studies should focus on overcoming the limitations of this exploratory study. Expanding the sample of study to beyond college students would most likely provide researchers with a new array of reasons why people use social media and Twitter. Additionally, further studies on Twitter should focus on gender and ethnicity, as well as focus on different gratifications of users. In regards to Twitter, this researcher believes that conducting a content analysis of the social networking site to specifically see what topics are being discussed (and for how long) could lend crucial insight on what people are communicating about on social media sites. While major global news stories are often discussed on Twitter (Richmond, 2011), the literature suggests that this social media network has everyday value in regards to traveling and teaching as well (Hampp, 2009; Higgins, 2011). Additionally, Twitter continues to be integrated into the world of journalism as well and focusing on the pros and cons of citizen Twitter journalists would be worthy of study. Examining Twitter in these specific settings would help scholars understand the strengths and weaknesses of the network further.

Testing Twitter against the Technology Acceptance Model introduced by Mahantanankoon and O'Sullivan (2008) would be another worthwhile direction to take this topic. Twitter has run into problems about the network crashing and security concerns so seeing if these issues affect user behavior could be an interesting study. Additionally, seeing how Twitter can work in conjunction with other social media networks would be helpful in understanding how these technologies can make communication easier, more widespread, and faster (Quan-Hasse et.al, 2002).

Conclusion

The findings from this study provide support to a significant amount of the current literature and existing research on social media networks. This study's results show that social media and specifically Twitter are connecting people in new ways, just as Moody (2010) suggested in his study. By examining the different ways people use Twitter, the gratifications sought and obtained from the social media network, the different types of information users share on Twitter, and comparing passive and active functions, this study has made a significant stride forward in understanding a very understudied topic. Overall, Twitter users utilize the "tweeting" and "mentioning other users" functions more so than any other function Twitter offers. Twitter users are motivated to use the social media network for entertainment, passing time, and expressive purposes but actually are most gratified in terms of entertainment, relational maintenance, and information seeking. Additionally, Twitter users are very careful about the types of information they share; hobbies and interests are much more commonly shared than personal information about relationships and behavior on Twitter. However, results suggest that people are more likely to share all types of information through face-to-face

conversations rather than on Twitter. Lastly, the passive users of Twitter obtained greater gratifications in regards to relational maintenance and information than active user

Appendix A
Survey Script

Demographics

1. What is your approximate age?
 - Younger than 18 (1)
 - 18 - 19 (2)
 - 20 - 21 (3)
 - 22 - 24 (4)
 - 25 - 29 (5)
 - 30 and over (6)

2. What is your ethnicity? (check all that apply)
 - American Indian or Alaska Native (1)
 - African-American (2)
 - Asian or Pacific Islander (3)
 - Caucasian (4)
 - Hispanic (5)
 - Other (6) _____
 -

3. What is your gender?
 - Male (1)
 - Female (2)

4. What is your academic standing?
 - Freshman (1)
 - Sophomore (2)
 - Junior (3)
 - Senior (4)
 - Graduate (5)

Social Media Familiarity and Usage

5. Please respond to the following statement about your social media use (reverse coded)

	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)
I am familiar with social media networks like YouTube, Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. How frequently do you access each of the following social media networks?

	10+ times a day (1)	5-9 times a day (2)	2-4 times a day (3)	1 time each day (4)	Weekly (5)	Never (6)
YouTube (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Facebook (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
MySpace (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Twitter (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. How often do you access social media networks from the following locations?
(Reverse Coded)

	10+ times a day (1)	5-9 times a day (2)	2-4 times a day (3)	1 time each day (4)	Weekly (5)	Never (6)
From a home computer (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
From a work computer (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
From a school computer (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
From a laptop (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
From a mobile device (phone, iPad, etc) (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. On average, how many hours a week do you spend on social media networks?
_____ Hours spent on social media networks each week (1)

9. What do you primarily use social media networks for? (check all that apply)

- Getting information (1)
- Entertainment (2)
- Networking (3)
- Meeting new friends (4)
- Seeing what my friends are doing (5)
- Passing the time (6)
- Sharing information about myself (7)
- other (please fill in) (8) _____

General Twitter Results

10. Please mark the appropriate response (reverse coded)

	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)
I am familiar with the social media network Twitter (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. I am a registered user of Twitter

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To What is the primary reason you don't ...If Yes Is Selected, Then Skip To I access my Twitter account

11a. What is the primary reason you don't use Twitter?

If What is the primary reason ... Is Not Empty, Then Skip To End of Survey

12. I access my Twitter account...(

- Rarely (0)
- Monthly (1)
- Once a week (2)
- Several times a week (3)
- Once a day (4)
- 2-4 times a day (5)
- 5-8 times a day (6)
- 9-12 times a day (7)
- more than 12 times a day (8)

13. How often do you access Twitter from the following locations? (reverse coded)

	10+ times a day (1)	5-9 times a day (2)	2-4 times a day (3)	1 time each day (4)	Weekly (5)	Never (6)
From a home computer (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
From a work computer (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
From a school computer (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
From a laptop computer (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
From a mobile device (phone, iPad, etc) (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
From www.Twitter.com (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
From a 3rd-party Twitter application (Echofon, Twitterific, Tweetdeck, (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. For how many months have you been a registered user of Twitter?

_____ Number of months I have been a Twitter user (1)

15. The following questions are about a variety of Twitter functions. Please read each of the following statements and mark the most appropriate.

	not at all (1)	not very well (2)	okay (3)	well (4)	very well (5)
I can conduct a search on Twitter (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can find someone I'm looking for on Twitter (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to sign up to follow someone on Twitter (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to use the retweet function on Twitter (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can retweet while adding additional content (commentary, photos, links, etc) on Twitter (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to tweet (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to tweet and provide additional content (pictures, links, audio, etc) (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to mention someone else in my tweets by using the "@" sign (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to directly message someone on Twitter (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Use of Twitter Functions (RQ1)

16. How frequently do you utilize the following Twitter functions? (reverse coded)

	10+ times a day (1)	5-9 times a day (2)	2-4 times a day (3)	1 time each day (4)	Weekly (5)	Never (6)
searching (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
following other users (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
retweeting (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
retweeting and adding additional content (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
tweeting (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
tweeting and providing additional content (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
mentioning other users (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
direct messaging others (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

17. I am more likely to follow accounts on Twitter that...

- Inspire me (1)
- Relate to me (2)
- Know me personally (3)
- Entertain me (4)
- Educate or inform me (5)

Gratifications Sought (RQ2)

18. I use Twitter for the following reasons: (check all that apply)
- to send a direct message to someone (1)
 - to pass the time when bored (2)
 - to see other people's tweets and see what they are doing (3)
 - it makes me cool among my peers (4)
 - to search for information (5)
 - to share the tweets of others by retweeting (6)
 - to send tweets to my all of my followers (7)
 - it is part of my online routine (8)
 - it is entertaining (9)
 - to have fun (10)
 - to access news stories (11)
 - to share my own opinions and ideas through tweeting (12)
 - to communicate with my friends (13)
 - to occupy my time (14)
 - to read other people's profiles and tweets (15)
 - it is cool (16)
 - to access information about products (17)
 - to share my photos, videos, and other interests (18)
 - to stay in touch with people I interact with (19)
 - it is enjoyable (20)
 - to access information about film, music, sports, politics, or other interests (21)
 - to get in touch with people I know (22)
 - to see which of the people I know have joined Twitter (23)
 - to get news about Hollywood gossip or politics (24)
 - to get through to someone who is hard to reach (25)
 - other (please fill in) (26) _____

Gratifications Sought (RQ3)

19. I use Twitter...(check all that apply)

- because I can interact with others (1)
- because it passes the time away, especially when I'm bored (2)
- because it's enjoyable (3)
- because it's "cool" (4)
- because it gives me information about my interests (5)
- because I can share my own ideas and opinions (6)
- because I can stay in touch with people I know (7)
- because I have nothing better to do (8)
- because it's entertaining (9)
- because other people do it (10)
- because it keeps me up-to-date on what's happening in the world (11)
- because I can disclose information about my life with others (12)
- other: (please fill in) (13) _____

Self-Disclosure on Twitter (RQ4)

20. I am likely to share information... (check all that apply)

	on Twitter (1)	on Facebook (2)	through text messages (3)	on my blog (4)	through face- to-face conversations (5)	I don't share that type of information (6)
about my alcohol use (1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
about my drug use (2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
about my romantic relationships (3)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
about my friendships (4)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
about my sex life (5)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
about my social activities (6)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
about my work life (7)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
about my interests and hobbies (8)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
about my religion (9)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
about my sports interests (10)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
about my political views and opinions (11)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
about problems in my life (12)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

21. I am cautious about the information I share on Twitter and other social media networks? (reverse coded)

- Strongly agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

22. The single reason I give my friends for my using Twitter is:

Gratifications Obtained: Passive vs. Active Functions (RQ5)

23. CLICK ON AND DRAG THREE OF THE STATEMENTS BELOW INTO THE MOST SATISFYING BOX. THEN, CLICK ON AND DRAG THREE OF THE STATEMENTS BELOW INTO THE LEAST SATISFYING BOX. The most/least satisfying uses of Twitter are... (please rank)

Most satisfying	Least satisfying
_____ search (1)	_____ search (1)
_____ follow other users (2)	_____ follow other users (2)
_____ read what other users are tweeting (3)	_____ read what other users are tweeting (3)
_____ retweet existing messages (4)	_____ retweet existing messages (4)
_____ retweet existing messages and add my own content (commentary, photos, audio, links, etc) (5)	_____ retweet existing messages and add my own content (commentary, photos, audio, links, etc) (5)
_____ tweet (6)	_____ tweet (6)
_____ tweet and provide additional content (photos, audio, links, etc) (7)	_____ tweet and provide additional content (photos, audio, links, etc) (7)
_____ mention other users (8)	_____ mention other users (8)
_____ direct message other users (9)	_____ direct message other users (9)
_____ interact with others (10)	_____ interact with others (10)

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- *2008-2009 Exceeding Expectations Award Winner* Student Activities Board
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