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PUTTING SOCIAL MEDIA TO WORK: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF HOW
BUSINESSES ARE INCORPORATING SOCIAL MEDIA

by

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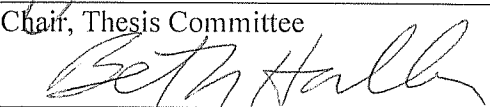
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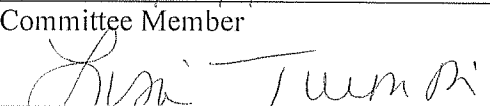
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Abstract

Social media are emerging as a new form of communication that needs to be integrated into existing communication plans within organizations. In this study, an analysis of 85 pieces of content gathered from business publications, newspapers, magazines, blogs, and websites were analyzed to identify how the news media is presenting social media to business owners. A series of in-depth interviews were conducted with 10 local business owners to obtain information on where they turn to get inspiration on how to use social media for their businesses. A comparative analysis was conducted with the information obtained in the interviews and content analysis. Both business owner and news media agree that using social media in the workplace is beneficial as a marketing tool, as well as to connect with potential and existing customers. However, no participant of this study reported consulting news articles for inspiration on how to use the tools.

Keywords: social media, Twitter, Facebook, content analysis, workplace, business, in-depth interviews.

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Introduction

In a relatively short period of time, a variety of technology and communications devices have seamlessly been incorporated into everyday life (Orange, 2011). Social media marketing is rapidly growing, and businesses are attempting to keep up with the emergence of new technologies (Junco & Chickering, 2010; Kozinets, de Valck, Wojnicki, & Wilner, 2010). Companies are attracted to social media because it has the ability to humanize brands, encourage the collection of rapid feedback on products and ideas, and enables a sense of collaboration between the company and the consumer (McDonald & Connor, 2011). For many companies adopting social media the motivation for integration is based on the changing roles, responsibilities, skills, communication styles, risk tolerance and trust (Naslund, 2010).

Background Information

Market demands. There is a growing gap between the demands of the market, and the capacity of organizations to meet those demands, as well as comprehend how to manage a complex communication network (Day, 2011). The growing gap is undoubtedly costing businesses profitability now and could harm competitiveness in the future. The challenge is finding ways to use past and present ideas to create effective business models (Lawson-Borders, 2010). The forces behind the expanding gap are found in the evolution of the Internet and the diminishing cost of communication (Day, 2011). Companies are now able to communicate with previously unattainable groups at little or no cost. Users are able to generate content and participate in the online conversation as well.

Increased communication and information. The consumer is no longer a passive recipient of the company's decision and can participate in idea generation, design, or production (Chakravorti, 2010). The increase in user generated content highlights concerns such as the quality and decency of information posted online (Singer & Ashman, 2009). It will become equally important for organizations to stay atop the conversations happening online in order to be proactive and leverage the information available (Orange, 2011). Companies that open their innovation and idea generation models to incorporate new technologies will receive insight from stakeholders and be able to take the feedback and potentially innovate at a greater speed with lower risk (Chakravorti, 2010).

Additionally, organizations are trying to capture the information individuals share online in order to generate a better picture of their consumers (Orange, 2011). This information gathering process will eventually switch over to an information processing practice so businesses can identify exactly who their audiences are. However the growth and interconnectedness of embedded information systems will eventually raise major challenges and privacy implications (Orange, 2011). The ability for any individual to post comments on online forums owned by businesses leaves the business owners in a position to be liable for the comments posted if they are not aware of the risks associated with such technologies (McDonald & Connor, 2011). It is difficult to strike the balance between freedom of expression and the right for individuals and businesses not to have their reputation harmed by defamatory statements. Although information is being created and pushed out in a minimal amount of time, the creators of the content should follow the

same ethical standards that apply to content found in print media (Singer & Ashman, 2009).

Measurability. It is important to verify the impact of an organization's social media use to identify if it is effective or even worth the time spent generating the content. According to Paine (2011), "Return on Investment" (ROI), is a profitability measure that evaluates the performance of a business or an action by a business. However this definition does not include *engagement, influence, awareness, friends, followers, hits* or *re-tweets*, which are terms typically used to identify the effectiveness of a social media campaign (Paine, 2011). Some marketers feel that the ability to measure the ROI of social media is irrelevant because, an organization measuring reputation as a measure of success is most likely to be the one pushing to incorporate social media into their budgets (Morrissey, 2010). While digital channels and online communication platforms offer many data collection points, they do not come with a guidebook explaining how to assign value to the information.

The ability to communicate constantly, cheaply, and effortlessly creates a large amount of communication clutter and can make it hard for participants to select the important pieces of messages (Orange, 2011). The large amount of available information causes people to be immersed in both the digital and real worlds simultaneously and constantly multitasking, leading individuals to pay *continuous partial attention* to the content they are processing (Orange, 2011). Information overload, which is the excess of available information, results in the loss of ability to make decisions, process information, and prioritize tasks (Day, 2011).

Trends and Topic Significance

Social media is a relatively new form of communication and the research available on the topic is broad. Four main trends were identified among the body of literature selected for review: implications of social media use in the workplace (McDonald & Connor, 2011; Orange, 2011; Paine, 2011; Picard, 2009; Singer & Ashman, 2009), suggested use for implementing social media in businesses (Barnes & Mattson, 2008; Barnes & Mattson, 2009; Bond, 2010; Williams & Williams, 2008), social media as the new form of word-of-mouth advertising (Chatterjee, 2011; Colliander & Dahlen, 2011; Wang, Baker, Wagner, & Wakefield, 2007), and lastly relationships and the behavioral use of social media (Blackshaw, 2011; Campbell, Pitt, Parent, & Berthon, 2011; Sarringhaus, 2011; Taske & Plude, 2011).

It is important to analyze the current trends that appear in news sources regarding emerging business topics such as social media use by organizations, because business owners often turn to these publications to get information about new business techniques. Small business owners are often playing multiple roles in their business and have limited resources to throw into experimental marketing techniques. News sources provide information to business owners about how to evolve business practices by incorporating new technologies and communication tools. However with the emergence of technologies such as blogs and online news sources the credibility of the author is questionable, considering anyone can publish a blog that is searchable on the Internet. Trends apparent among news articles regarding social media use in organizations need to be investigated to identify how the news media is framing the integration of this communication tool into daily operations.

Purpose of Study

While studies have been conducted analyzing the content of social media such as Facebook, Twitter and blogs, the focus was typically on the type of content present on a specific type of social media (Greer & Ferguson, 2011; Papacharissi, 2007). There is a gap in research regarding where business owners are learning how to use the new technologies and what kind of information is being provided to them. Companies need to be aware of both the benefits and risks associated with implementing new forms of communication, as well as the source from which they are gathering information about how to use the tools.

To help fill this gap in research, this study analyzed the content of a body of randomly collected news articles to identify common trends. The articles were found online through common search terms including: “employees and social media,” “social media in the workplace,” “social media and business.” The thematic results of the content analysis were compared to responses collected from the ten local business owners who were interviewed for study to identify any overlapping themes. The goal was to identify where business owners are gathering information regarding how to incorporate social media into daily business operations and compare that to the information found in recent news articles to isolate overlapping trends or patterns. This is significant to study because social media is a new form of communication which has already altered the way individuals communicate with personal connections. This new form of communication will also alter the way businesses interact with their customers and stakeholders, much like how email once transformed the way members of an organization communicate.

This study investigated what types of sources are cited in news articles regarding social media use for businesses and identified what the news media are reporting with

reference to social media use for businesses. Apparent themes were analyzed, which appeared in news articles about social media use for businesses. The results of this study can help bring communication theories up to date with the new forms of available communication tools. Agenda setting theory has only been applied to traditional news media channels. The way in which news media present the concept of social media across new forms of communication should be studied to help bring the theory up-to-date with current technologies. It is important to identify the manner in which news media are reporting about social media use by businesses in order to isolate how the new communication tools are being presented. This information is applicable when interviewing business owners to pinpoint if they are consumers of the news articles, and to see if they share the same views. This information is important to business owners because it will help them identify if incorporating social media is appropriate for their business, as well as how to communicate better over different channels.

Literature Review

Implications of Social Media Use in the Workplace

The emergence of sites like Facebook and Twitter mark the creation of a new category of communication technologies often referred to as “social networking.” These technologies are often used to stay in touch and interact with friends (Junco & Chickering, 2010). Social networking is identified as a sub category of social media and is a category of communication technology. For the purpose of this study “social media” is defined as a collection of websites, services, and activities that engage users through collaboration, sharing and democratization of roles and responsibilities (Junco & Chickering, 2010).

The right fit. The primary motivation of social marketing is to change behavior, with the cumulative effect of such modifications being an end benefit for society (Hill & Moran, 2011). Given the resistance to change complex behaviors, social marketers must understand how individuals perceive themselves and their actions, as well as how environmental factors such as peer influence may affect adoption of behaviors. Marketers must also learn how to target various audiences with the appropriate message (Hill & Moran, 2011; McGovern, 2007). The increased market demands on organizations for tailored programs, mass customization, multimedia optimization, and proliferating channels must be met with a set of capabilities proficient in dealing with them (Day, 2011). Organizations should implement dynamic capabilities in order to create, extend, or modify the resource base. The main functions of dynamic capabilities are: to identify environmental changes that could be threats or opportunities; respond to the changes by changing and transforming available resources and to select organizational configurations and business models to deliver value to customers (Day, 2011).

Prior to integrating new technologies a company needs to have a good explanation for its use, especially if the technology does not generate money or at least pay for the cost of operation (Picard, 2009). There will always be a residual capabilities gap between what a company can manage and what is expected of it because events in markets are moving at Internet time. Consumers are gaining more control, technology continues to advance, and the decision making processes of even the most nimble of companies struggle to keep up (Day, 2011). Organizations are often considered to be rigid in their behaviors and once a capability is mastered, an organization is likely to keep doing it long past the point of obsolescence (Day, 2011). Companies should be mindful that a

primary reason professionals participate in social networks is to collaborate, not to be sold to (Bulmer & DiMauro, 2009).

While the rapid surge of new technologies could be interpreted as overload, a critical transformation is occurring that is important for companies and organizations to understand, so they can plan and adapt their reactions (Orange, 2011). According to the media evolution theory, the institutionalization of an invention involves the discovery of new possibilities of communication; formatting new media functions; adapting new forms of media; developing new economic models; and the acceptance of new media through the creation of a new political framework and legal order for the new media (Stober, 2004). The secondary diffusion stage involves the distribution of the new media and the acceptance by users reaffirms the successful emergence of the new media.

Many organizations have considered integrating social media into their communication plans, but dismissed its advantages as transitory products of the new generation entering the workforce (Sarringhaus, 2011). Not everyone wants to be, or will be, equally connected through social media, sharing their opinions and the details of their lives. Some find these tools highly useful and satisfying, while others find them worthless and disappointing (Picard, 2009). However, for organizations this shift in communication patterns represents a monumental shift in management responsibilities, moving away from managing human labor to managing systems (Orange, 2011).

Measurement. The digital world offers millions of ways to dissect data and produce lists of influencers and mavens in a given industry, or field of study, but there remains no definitive way to rank bloggers or social network experts with any consistency (Falls, 2011). In any social media success story, the desired return is clearly

identified; it is impossible to measure success if the goals are not clearly outlined. It is imperative to focus on the quality and value delivered by the relationships with the consumers, not to solely measure impact and success based on dollars (Paine, 2011).

Identifying measurable influencer and brand message characteristics that can increase recommendation and referral visits are critical to a social media advertising strategy (Chatterjee, 2011). In social media and user generated messages lies a powerful compass to guide, shape and reinforce brand strategy (Blackshaw, 2011). With the proper listening techniques, protocols, platforms, and metrics in place, brands can harness a unique opportunity to redefine the rules of consumer understanding and brand building. There is little that cannot be measured or quantified; however, smart decisions need to be made about what is important.

Organizations attempt to measure social media effectiveness through ROI, which evaluates the money gained or lost in an investment compared to the amount of money invested (Paine, 2011). Measuring ROI for social media is typically based on its impact on business; however, the results should be evaluated in terms of the actual investment made (Paine, 2011). Businesses must take into account the wage of the employee or employees who are taking time away from completing other tasks to generate content and manage the social media presence to accurately measure the true investment. Qualitative data can be used to analyze the content's tone. The direction of information produced by the author can identify if they will be able to have an impact on the potential customers (Falls, 2011).

Another measure of a social network site's influence is based on an engagement score, which is determined by an algorithm that measures bookmarks, comments,

inbound links and more (Falls, 2011). Some organizations measure social network influence by the number of fans or followers the contributor has. However, organizations should not judge social media contributor's influential appeal solely by the number of followers alone. An individual with only 500 followers should still be considered influential. In some cases, those with smaller audiences have even more influence over their readers' opinions precisely because their community is smaller and more tightly knit (Falls, 2011). Organizations need to understand that as of now, there is not a perfect measurement system to gauge online influence. However, all available data should be considered, and the more important information to the business, consumers, and products respectively should be identified (Falls, 2011). Qualitative and quantitative data should be combined along with common sense when interpreting the available information in order to gain a clear perception of the organization's media presence among its publics.

Regulations. Bond (2010) stated that with the emergence of a new technology, so to should policies, practices and procedures for that new technology. Therefore, social media use within the company, on behalf of the company, or by the employees of the company should be considered when creating policies and procedures since all groups are connected. A reason for slow adoption of social media includes issues of productivity, security, privacy, and content ownership related to business social media use (Kho, 2008). With new products and features rapidly emerging, companies must find the time and resources to not only participate in social media, but also to keep atop of any risks that may arise. The uncertainty surrounding regulations, policies, and the use of social media is a contributing factor to why some businesses are watching while other companies test out social media.

In a hyper-connected marketplace, fueled by the speed of the Web 2.0 world, the impact is not just on business transactions and connections, but also on all the internal and external customers and publics that organization needs to satisfy (Frahm, 2010). Organizations need to be protective of their brand in an ever-evolving market to ensure the preferred image is being presented to public and private stakeholders at all times (Gilpin, 2010). Social networks are as an integral part of our life now as mobile phones were ten years ago, at a time when the phones were perceived to be an invasion of privacy (Bond, 2010).

Oftentimes, the privacy of online communications is erroneously assumed by the users (Junco & Chickering, 2010). Social media participants may simply fail to consider issues of professionalism in their online actions, and may display exemplary ethics in their offline actions (Greyson, Kind, & Chretien, 2010). Many people experience a sense of dis-inhibition in their online actions. Social media in particular can create a perception of anonymity and detachment from social cues and consequences for online actions. The potential impact of such indiscretions is much greater online than typical face-to-face interactions due to the wide reach of this media. If employees are connected with the organization with which they are employed on social media, their poor behavior posted online may be linked back to the organization and corrupt public perception.

Courts may appear to give less weight to gossip on blogs than defamatory statements published in books or articles. However, no matter the forum, if users publish untrue allegations which damage or undermine a business's reputation, then a claim of defamation can be made (McDonald & Connor, 2011). Businesses should pay close attention to the extent to which they moderate their site, as well as the policies and

procedures they have in place to deal with defamatory posts. As both businesses and individuals increase their participation in virtual worlds and social networks, the opportunities to use intellectual property rights to protect reputation, innovation and the brand also increase (Bond, 2010). The core principles of defamation law and its defenses have not changed; the law is used to interpret online media in the same way it does print media, despite the growth of technology and social media (McDonald & Connor, 2011).

Source and information credibility. Social media tools provide an easy way for members of the public to take part in discussions with larger groups of people, allowing them to draw attention to issues and topics that may have otherwise been overlooked. Social media allow the consumer to match the scale of the companies for which they are customers, prospects and employees—and allow consumers to make a difference (Moran & Gossieaux, 2010). While this may be beneficial to individuals and small groups, the content typically generated by news organizations and large corporations are being distributed by others, thus removing the need for readers to seek out the original source of information (Picard, 2009). Prior research has found strong inter-media agenda setting effects between elite-to-less-elite traditional mass media entities (Meraz, 2009).

Few studies have been conducted on the ability of traditional mass media to enact agenda setting ability in citizen-controlled Internet spaces. For the purpose of this study, the agenda setting theory is used to help navigate the body of literature in an attempt to identify what kinds of messages news sources are delivering to business owners giving instruction on how to use social media tools. Agenda setting research has typically focused on what the public learns from the media including “first-level” items such as objects or issues as well as “second-level” issues such as attributes (Ragas & Roberts,

2009). Agenda setting is a part of a larger process called agenda melding, where through a desire to avoid social isolation individuals develop a need to join groups (Ragas & Roberts, 2009). The need for orientation through media, fueled by the drive to belong, often causes individuals to learn and adopt the agenda of the group (Ragas & Roberts, 2009).

In online networks, relationships among actors are expressed through hyperlinks and the result of elite bias where a few sites command the majority of the attention. The popularity of online networks are driven by the egalitarian metrics of link traffic and link totals where popular sites are propelled to celebrity status through proven credibility and reputation which leads to more traffic (Meraz, 2009). Popular sites have the ability to drive traffic to lesser-known blogs by connecting and filtering other sites through link usage in their stories.

The introduction of new media allows citizens to engage in discourse on all levels, and the rise of user generated content has blurred the line between producers and consumers of media content (Lăzăriou, 2011). The increased level of interactivity on a site can lead to higher involvement, more positive attitudes toward the site, and higher source credibility (Hill & Moran, 2011). Ethics standards should be the same whether publishing content in print or online, however, staffing pressures are eroding the ability to verify information before it is disseminated (Singer & Ashman, 2009). Organizations acknowledge experiencing a struggle with how to ethically accommodate the opportunities for freedom as well as dialogue presented by user generated comments while protecting their credibility and sense of responsibility (Singer & Ashman, 2009).

Conversely, the amount of information available at the push of a search button makes it increasingly easier for individuals to fact-check statements coming from organizations (Orange, 2011). Determining the quality of online posts is difficult. Some consumers are aware of the fact that marketers often attempt to influence online WOM recommendations by compensating consumers to review products and even post their own reviews about their products (Chatterjee, 2011). Social networking profile pages allow users to display their connections as well as other information such as comments from their connections, which define their participation within the networking site. Profile viewers can use history of engagement within the social networking site, such as the number of connections and posts, as signals of contributor credibility (Chatterjee, 2011).

Considering the ease of access and low financial investment of a social media presence the credibility of a source is more important than ever. Anyone can publish articles on a blog or website which can mislead the reader to believe the information is credible simply because it was on the Internet. With many organizations struggling to keep up with the market demands of having a presence on social media, it is imperative to identify if that is the best use for those resources and if it is cost beneficial. One way to sift through some of the information available on the topic of incorporating social media into an organizations daily communication plan is to identify the credibility of the sources cited in the articles.

The social information processing theory proposes multiple mechanisms whereby co-workers can influence the attitudes and behaviors of those with whom they interact (Fulk, 1993). This theory helps to identify what factors may influence an individual's

decision to incorporate social media in the workplace based on the opinions of their peers. Social information from co-workers can take several forms: 1) obvious statement that individuals assimilate; 2) interpretations of events; 3) communications which increase the saliency of events simply by calling attention to them; and 4) guidelines for judging the appropriateness of particular behaviors and for appropriately rationalizing workplace activities. Fulk (1993) proposed that social information will influence perceived media characteristics, communication task requirements, attitudes toward communication media and media use behavior. It is important to identify the perception of a new form of communication among the members of the organization in order to identify their support and existing knowledge of the tool. This information may affect the final decision of an organization when considering incorporating social media into their communication plan.

Suggested Use for Social Media in Businesses

Companies which are willing to try new communication tools are quickly adopting social media practices within the workplace to communicate both business-to-business, as well as business-to-customer (Kho, 2008). While some businesses are still trying to figure out how social media best fits into their communications, it is important to understand that it is not about the medium per se, but rather about being social and using the tool to better serve customers (Moran & Gossieaux, 2010). Socially innovative companies fundamentally think differently about business. They are human-centric and turn business processes into social processes and embrace the unruliness that comes with being truly social (Gossieaux & Moran, 2010).

Williams and Williams (2008) state that when integrating social media into the workplace, work cultures must be ready to support social media, communicators must be ready to change, and a plan and a budget should accompany the new investment. Testing social media internally first can improve business perceptions through internal branding, knowledge sharing, collaboration, network building, idea generation, and most importantly, it can act as a lab for testing out new tools with social media (Naslund, 2010).

Relationship building. Social media can provide organizations with the opportunity to strategically network and close deals based on shared interests and personal engagement with previously unattainable audiences (Campbell, 2010). Through the use of professional networks and online communities, decision-makers are connecting and collaborating with peers, experts, and colleagues far and wide in an on-demand environment (Bulmer & DiMauro, 2009). The impact of these far reaching networks is becoming clearer every day as millions of consumers, partners, suppliers, and businesses discuss and share their professional experiences with each other, increasing levels of trust and reliance. Businesses need to learn how to harness the power of social networks to expand their customer bases. Social networks can also be used to improve service, gain additional ways to interact with and respond to customers and obtain feedback in a timelier and less invasive manner (Fluss & Rogers, 2010). The ability to create relationships with and among users is a widely recognized benefit of using social media. However this goal has yet to demonstrate its effectiveness at maintaining or producing better overall use of the products (Picard, 2009).

Building a network of using social media to deepen customer intimacy has become the theme of today. However, organizations often overlook the impact of social media to change behaviors and the potential to use social media to impact decision-making processes (Bulmer & DiMauro, 2009). Organizations can find out where specific groups hang out online, and if that group does not already have a dedicated space in which to meet, the organization has the opportunity to host them on a platform with their own community (Gossieaux & Moran, 2010). New media usage contributes to decreasing attention paid to media messages, which is a problematic reality for marketers (Hill & Moran, 2011). Recruiting and retaining audiences through social networking sites is difficult. The reason for the decreasing use over time may be based on social marketers' inability to draw enough interest, partly because campaigns are not implemented based on the ways that individuals use new media.

Organizations should not think that all of the information they send to customers and prospects, with or without approval, is important to them (Gossieaux & Moran, 2010). Innovative communication measures should be implemented to add value to the conversations taking place online. The level of interactivity appropriate for a campaign depends on the Internet usage levels of the audience, as more frequent users of media may prefer higher levels of interactivity relative to less frequent users (Hill & Moran, 2011). Effective customer relationships are the core to any successful organization, and the strength of any organization is largely dependent upon the company's ability to deliver the right products and services to customers in a timely way (Bulmer & DiMauro, 2009). Social networking sites possess the ability to connect internal constituents with external customers and to build a truly sustainable organization (Frahm, 2010). A

sustainable organization is one where the company thrives and employees act as brand ambassadors who assist in social recruiting and advocate for the company's products and services. By cultivating meaningful relationships online, product development leaders can work with clients to share roadmaps and plans in order to receive early input from people who would be buyers at a later stage (Bulmer & DiMauro, 2009).

Branding. Social networking sites function as channels for interaction between companies and their consumers, helping to transmit company brand value (Lin & Lu, 2011). Many companies are actively developing social media identities, enabling the organizations to enhance brand attractiveness and entice consumer attention. However, organizations do not always put as much effort into establishing brand awareness within the company as they do with refining external perceptions (Naslund, 2010). Internal communities can provide a broader, more interactive forum for sharing the company's vision, goals, and the focus of the brand itself (Naslund, 2010). As the field of social networking sites progresses, social marketing has followed in the footsteps of traditional marketing initiatives. Social marketing employs integrated marketing campaigns, relationship marketing techniques, segmenting audiences with appropriate messages, lowering costs, and properly positions the benefits of behavioral change (Hill & Moran, 2011).

Businesses should be mindful that it is possible for receivers to misinterpret messages sent over electronic channels, and that expectancies influence impressions (Junco & Chickering, 2010). Individuals have been found to pay less attention to marketing messages when faced with environmental distractions, and retain less information overall (Hill & Moran, 2011). The overwhelming amount of information

encountered using interactive media can also impede the ability to comprehend more complex messages. The commonality of media multi-tasking, combined with the likelihood of information overload, suggests that the heightened use of sensory filters to cope with information burdens make it likely that many messages will be ignored by users (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008).

For products that pose risks, such as health products, merely generating awareness may not be enough (Junco & Chickering, 2010). The organizations ability to provide information that mitigate the perceived risk and encourage recipients to engage with the brand is critical to the success of the social media strategy (Chatterjee, 2011). Fan pages can provide a channel for posting themed content, information, and activities; therefore, individuals who share interests and ideas are attracted to interact on these pages (Lin & Lu, 2011). This interaction is a way to strengthen relationships between fans, as well as provide a powerful way to transmit brand values. Regardless of the size of an organization, the success of marketing its products, services, or the brand itself will be determined by how well the interest of the receiver is engaged on multiple platforms (Campbell, 2010). Interactivity enhances learning since it allows the time necessary to process messages and it helps individuals pay more attention to and retain greater amounts of information (Hill & Moran, 2011).

Word-of-mouth advertising. Online WOM information exchange is multi-directional and involves multiple audiences and allows consumers to post or passively read consumer generated brand messages (Chatterjee, 2011). Word-of-mouth endorsements, whether delivered face-to-face or transmitted electronically, are powerful promotional messages (Strutton, Taylor, & Thompson, 2011). However, it yields no

advertising or positioning value unless recipients cooperate by passing along messages to others, implicitly endorsing the messages and the original sender. Recipients are naturally more predisposed to pay attention to forwarded messages and to evaluate their content more favorably than those sent on behalf of an anonymous sender.

Networks. Commercial reports noting the benefits of social media in launching new products and brands have led many firms to incorporate the new technology in their communication plan (Chatterjee, 2011). Not only has social media altered how often people communicate online, but it has also enlarged the collection of individuals they communicate with, resulting in new ways for behaviors to be influenced (Hill & Moran, 2011). One's propensity to send and receive advertising information is dependent on a combination of elemental traits such as introversion and extroversion. Compound traits such as the need for information, and situational traits such as shopping enjoyment also play a role in the likelihood that advertising information will be passed on (Strutton et al., 2011). Consumer generated feedback on a company or product typically contain jargon particular to one's social network or demographic group and are more likely to communicate social norms allowing the message to be interpreted with credibility (Chatterjee, 2011). Reciprocity is demonstrated when customers offer advice to one another in customer support communities, or when they warn friends or colleagues to stay away from brands that have poor products or services (Gossieaux & Moran, 2010). Social media allows the hyper-sociality to scale to the extent where it has an impact on business again.

Relationships. Exhibiting superior publicity effectiveness, blog effects are mediated by parasocial interaction (PSI), in which the readers' relationship with the

blogger is similar, and as powerful as a WOM relationship experienced with a friend (Colliander & Dahlen, 2011). Colliander and Dahlen (2011) argue that communication from sources with whom PSI is high will have a similar positive impact to WOM communications. Individuals have been found to give greater consideration to advice and information shared online, spending more time with websites that provide third-party evaluations, as such information can directly influence buying decisions, even if received purely from virtual sources (Hill & Moran, 2011).

Because the identity of the online WOM communicator is not constrained by the receivers' social circle, it is difficult for receivers to determine the quality and credibility of the product recommendations (Chatterjee, 2011). Source credibility becomes particularly important when the consumer has no choice but to take a person's word as a guarantee—persuasion which is particularly powerful in online settings where the consumer cannot test the product (Colliander & Dahlen, 2011). Consumer generated content as a form of WOM communication is perceived to be more reliable, credible and trustworthy by consumers compared to communication disseminated by an organization (Muñiz & Schau, 2007).

Due to the fact social networking sites can be viewed as social systems composed of members, and communication channels through which information about new products is transmitted, brand influencers have the ability to alter members' adoption behavior by selectively exposing them to information about new products (Chatterjee, 2011). Consumers making purchasing decisions based on recommendations from social media contributors tend to be more influenced based on the perceived experience and reputation of the author (Hill & Moran, 2011). Content contributors must have relevant

knowledge about the product or service, and their reputations must have a way to be evaluated online, such as reviewer rating systems.

Customer service tool. Social response theory, which suggests that people treat computers as social actors even when they know they do not possess human traits, offers directions in answering marketing questions about the effectiveness of website social cues (Moon, 2000). Several social responses that occur in human-human interactions have been found in human-computer interactions including politeness, reciprocity, interdependency among teammates, and flattery (Wang et al., 2007). Customization is identified as treating customers differently based on feedback from interactions, and a customer-driven individualization of the web experience (Hill & Moran, 2011). The customization of social networking sites is the ultimate for of differentiation, as organizations use these tools to tailor products, as well as the consumption built upon experience based on unique needs. Consumers have been found to respond more favorably to social cues that are designed to portray a representative of the company such as a service employee (Wang, et al. 2007). While companies are adding more self-serving features to shopping and check-out, personal interactions are still important to assist in forming cohesive connections with consumers.

Information vehicle. Today's consumers live in an interconnected world where information is critical to their lives. A developing trend in online communication is for an organization to not merely have a website for consumers to visit, but to reach out to the audience to deliver information (Stassen, 2010). The Internet communities not only help to stimulate the sharing of knowledge, but also influence online business activities (Lin & Lu, 2011). Blogging has impacted information dissemination in that regular citizens are

increasingly performing random acts of journalism and content contribution when they witness an event or discover a new product (Stassen, 2010). The evolution of social media has allowed consumers to move past being passive recipients of an organization's decision, and allows them to participate in the larger conversation (Chakravorti, 2010). An organization that chooses to harness this consumer input may be viewed as an "open company," which is willing to listen to their stakeholders input. In the new brand world of social marketing, marketers should know that allowing customers to initiate conversations is what keeps the brand alive (Fernando, 2007).

Ideas can come from anywhere in an organization, and social technologies can provide ample opportunities to share, generate and build on ideas in a collaborative, open format that has visibility across the organization. Internal social networks can provide a powerful platform for individuals and departments to share knowledge, expertise and collaborate on solutions for internal processes or even product developments or improvements (Naslund, 2010). The overlap of personal and work-life exists on social media and individuals recognize the evolution of new media is changing how information is shared with colleagues (Williams & Williams, 2008).

It is logical to assume that business owners turn to trusted news sources looking for information on social media whether it is advice, stories of success or stories of failure—people will turn to trusted sources to help navigate new channels of communication. It is important to identify the messages put forth by the business media regarding social media use for businesses.

Relationships and Behavioral Use of Social Media

Corporations were quick to recognize the advantages of social media to forge a closer relationship with customers, gain information about products, and to enhance public perception of an organization. The benefits of corporations using social media are being able to hear customer's views, respond to their comments and concerns in real-time, and gain insight into how the company is being discussed online (Crawford, 2009).

Adaptation. Companies wanting to participate in public relations and marketing efforts on social media have to be mindful of the culture on the particular platform on which they are communicating (Vorvoreanu, 2009). The organization's communication with its publics on different social media must conform to the respective social norms of that platform. Failure to adapt communication efforts to the social norms presents the risk of failed communication efforts. Corporations using social media can be seen as participating in a community and listening to the opinions of its members. They are utilizing an instant and low cost method of customer support, gaining an awareness of how a brand is discussed and identifying the patterns of consumer use and satisfaction (Crawford, 2009). As communication blocks get shorter, and there are fewer contextual clues, the ability to perceive tone diminishes, requiring messages to be clearer and more direct (Junco & Chickering, 2010).

Socioeconomic and generational considerations. The emergence of the Web 2.0 technologies has created a shift in Business-to-Person (B2P) communications. This shift in communication resulted in a new model for engagement and "Social Media Peer Groups" (SMPG) have emerged to hold important influence in shaping new business practices (Bulmer & DiMauro, 2009). This shift has disrupted many long-standing marketing, communications and selling beliefs which have historically guided how

companies interact, support and collaborate with customers (Bulmer & DiMauro, 2009). Organizations should be conscious of the socioeconomic digital divide that exists in access and use of social media (Junco & Chickering, 2010). Even though social media is gaining momentum, not all consumers will have access to these tools, nor will they choose to use social media. Social media sites are popularly believed to be a vehicle of democracy because it fosters decentralized citizen control as opposed to hierarchical elite control (Meraz, 2009). Social media takes the sole right of information creation away from large corporations and putting the power in the hands of involved and interested parties.

Social media promotes the creation of communities, which often thrive because the members are drawn to one another and understand the importance of person-to-person affinity (Moran & Gossieaux, 2010). The interaction with these other individuals online typically trumped the role of the goods, services or the presence of other online community features (Moran & Gossieaux, 2010). Communicating perpetually with one another through online social networks, text messaging, peer-to-peer video and tweets, Gen Y, or those born between 1982 and 1994, can make or break a viral campaign (Strutton et al., 2011). As any generational cohort passes through its most impressionable years, they collectively observe and experience key activities, attitudes and movement in which socio-culturally important individuals, institutions, or trends engage (Strutton et al., 2011). Organizations able to identify these communication and behavior patterns will have the ability to directly target the ideal their consumer.

Relationship management. Relationship management, a theoretical approach to public relations, focuses on building and maintaining relationships between organizations

and the public. While there is a desire to establish mutually beneficial organization-public relationships, time and context of communication should be taken into consideration. An organization should not attempt to communicate with publics at all times in all contexts. The notion of relationship management represents a fundamental change in the function and direction of public relations, moving away from traditional impact measurements, such as the number of stories picked up by the mass media, and in the direction of evaluating public relations initiatives based on the impact on the quality of the relationship between an organization and its publics (Ledingham, 2006).

While individuals are forming solid relationships online, the time spent socializing online takes away from time spent socializing in person (Pollet, Roberts, & Dunbar, 2011). Social media can be used to supplement, rather than replace other forms of communication, thus potentially enhancing a relationship. Finding the correct balance of social media and traditional communication is the challenge that business owners are left with.

Individuals who regularly visit a blog can develop a level of perceived intimacy with the writer (Colliander & Dahlén, 2011). This type of perceived social intimacy allows the individual to process the content found on the blog as if it were coming from a personal acquaintance which could result in higher source credibility. Considering the increase in perceived source credibility, and the strong reliance individuals have formed with online communication, it is necessary to identify the apparent themes among the content. Agenda setting theory has systematically sought to document the effects of mass media on the audience's cognitions (Meraz, 2009). By creating a shared, national pseudo-environment, mass media fulfill the important function of building a public consensus on

the important issues of the day. Based on the information presented the following research questions are advanced for study:

RQ1: What types of sources are cited in news articles on social media use for businesses?

RQ2: Where are business owners getting information on how to use social media?

RQ3: What are news media reporting with reference to social media use for businesses?

RQ4: What themes are apparent among news articles about social media use for businesses?

Methods

This study incorporated a content analysis of news articles that focused on the topic of social media in the workplace, as well as 10 interviews of local businesses that currently use social media as a part of their communications. Content analyses, as well as interviews, were conducted in order to outline the larger concept of social media use on behalf of organizations. The information analyzed in the content analysis portion of this study was compared to the results of the individual interviews to identify if business owners are following the advice provided in new media, as well as to compare and contrast recurring trends.

Interviews

Method selection. In-depth interviews are a technique commonly used to establish a clear picture of the participant's perspective on the research topic (Milena, Dainora, & Alin, 2008). The participant takes on the role of expert while the researcher

attempts to pinpoint the personal feelings, opinions, and experiences, gaining insights into how people interpret and order the world around them (Milena, Dainora, & Alin, 2008). Interviews allow for the participant to reveal insights about the topic that quantitative information cannot provide, with rich information like this only available through elaborative communication. In particular, the strategic use of questions used to search for hidden issues or symbolic references provided by the participant which cannot be provided through quantitative research (Durgee, 1985).

While the advantages to in-depth interviews include receiving personal insights not provided by qualitative data, receiving elaborative information from participants, creating a connection which stimulates information-sharing (Durgee, 1985; Milena et al., 2008). In-depth interview is perceived to be the method that will work the best in providing individual insights of small business owner's use and perception of social media use by businesses needed for this study.

Participants. The participants included in this study are local business owners who have a presence on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Businesses were selected through the *Baltimore Citysearch Social Media Directory*, which is a website featuring a searchable directory of Baltimore businesses which have a social media presence on Facebook or Twitter (baltimore.citysearch.com/browse/social-media-directory). Businesses were also identified through convenience snowball sampling method where individuals who agreed to participate in the research recommended other businesses to include in the study. Local businesses were selected to study the relationships and interactions the business owners have with their customers. The relationship is perceived to be stronger between a local business owner and their

customer in comparison to the connection a customer has with a chain company. This level of “Business to Person” (B2P) interaction is important to analyze the impact of the use of social media as a new communication tool to identify if there is a measurable impact of its use. Businesses of various ages were used in order to identify if older, more established businesses are using social media in a manner different from newer businesses.

Participants were selected using convenience sampling through the list available at the *Baltimore Citysearch Social Media Directory*, as well as through interview participant referrals. They were contacted via email and asked to participate in this study. The purpose of the study related to this research was explained to the participants, and they were made aware of the procedures used to collect and analyze the data. An application was submitted for Internal Review Board (IRB), and approved for research by the selected committee overseeing the research.

Method. Interview participants were given the option as to where and how the interview will be conducted. Methods of interviewing included face-to-face and email. Conversations conducted face-to-face were recorded in order to provide an accurate method of recollection if necessary. For interviews conducted via email, the transcript of the email served as the recording mechanism for the communication. The results of the interview questions were compiled and analyzed to identify any apparent themes among the participant’s responses. The themes were then compared to the results of the thematic interpretation of the content analysis portion of this study to highlight any overlap.

Interview questions. The interview questions are outlined to include a small set of background questions which were selected to help provide a general perspective of the

type of company the small business owner operates, and then subsequent questions are grouped by relevance to the corresponding research question it supports (see Appendix A for full list of interview questions). Questions in the background section seek to outline: the industry in which the business operates; the sites on which the business has a presence; the type of information included on the social media site; as well as how often the content is updated and by whom. Subsequently, the questions are broken down into segments focused on identifying answers to the proposed research questions. In an attempt to identify the types of sources the business owner perceived to be present in news article regarding the topic of social media use by businesses, one question asks the interviewee when gathering information about how to use social media, how do you judge if the source providing suggestions is credible. For the second research question investigating what news sources are suggesting for social media use by businesses an example of a question to be used in the interviews is what motivated you to create a social media presence for your business. Finally, in an attempt to categorize the apparent themes among news articles regarding social media use by businesses, questions will be asked to identify if how they feel the news media is portraying the use of social media by businesses.

Content Analysis

Method selection. Content analysis has been conducted on blogs as well as a specific social media channel such as Twitter (Greer & Ferguson, 2011; Papacharissi, 2007). When the conversations on social media are analyzed and relationships are identified, themes emerge which provides insight into the meaning of the content. Content analysis is the systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of message

characteristics (Neundorf, 2002). To be more specific, a thematic content analysis will be conducted, which is the scoring of content for substance, style, or both to assess the characteristics or experiences of persons, groups, or historical periods.

Content analysis was selected as a method of analysis because it is used to investigate messages and their meanings. Since social media is a collection of electronically transmitted messages which act as a transcript of a conversation, content analysis is an important method of analysis. Frequencies of term and source appearances are analyzed to identify dominate social media platforms and the most commonly used “expert sources.” Interviews were also conducted to complement the information analyzed in the content analysis portion in order to provide an in-depth view of how businesses are using social media and where they are getting their information. Without the interview component of this study it can only be assumed where business owners are getting their information about how to use social media.

Data. The data used in the content analysis portion of this study was obtained through Google alerts in order to gather articles which would typically be available to any level business owner or marketing professional. The alerts were set up using search terms including: “employees and social media,” “social media in the workplace,” “social media and business.” Of the articles yielded from these search terms, 85 articles were selected for study based on relevance and substance of content. Only articles published in the United States were used in order to eliminate any bias or differences in foreign media and social media consumption. The articles range from 400 to approximately 1,300 words in length. The articles selected were from a variety of publications including, newspapers, magazines, blogs, and websites. The articles were obtained between October of 2011 and

March of 2012. Opinion articles were excluded from the content to be analyzed in an attempt to identify the type of information available from presumably credible sources.

Academic articles were excluded from the content to be analyzed based on the assumption that business owners would not typically have access to, or interest in, those kinds of publications.

Code sheet. Since social media is a newer form of communication limited examples of code sheets for this topic were available as a reference for analysis.

Therefore a code sheet was established which was used to analyze the content to identify several aspects of messages included in the news articles selected for this study.

Publication type was coded for to identify if the article was from a newspaper, magazine, blog, business publication, website, or an online only publication. The length of each article was identified and tallied as either a short story of 499 words or less, a medium story with 500-1,199 words, or a long story with 1,200 words or more (see Appendix B for full code sheet).

Story type. The type of story was coded for to identify if it could be categorized as a story on a specific company, news about a new product or feature, how-to, or a feature story. How the article is categorized was included in the study to identify how social media is being presented in the news media. The kind of examples of social media use provided in the article were coded for in order to identify how authors offered suggestions for use by categorizing them as real examples of social media use, a list of how-to items, both real examples and a list of how-to items, general examples or suggestions, none at all, or survey results of a study about social media. This information is important to categorize in order to understand how the news media is instructing

business owners to use social media and to identify if the suggestions are based on actual social media use or on opinion.

Manner in which social media is referenced. The types of social media mentioned in the articles were categorized to identify which social media platforms were mentioned within publications as well as to pinpoint the dominant social media platform based on number of mentions. The way in which social media is referenced in articles is important to consider because it affects the readers interpretation of the author's credibility. When specific social media sites are mentioned by their name and the features are identified by the correct terms, the information would appear to be more credible than an article in which instructions were given about how to use social media in general. The terms used when referencing social media are important to analyze since the different platforms should not be used in the same manner. The content was coded for reference terms including: social media, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Linkedin, Google+, Blog, Website, Foursquare, and other.

Sources cited. The sources cited in the articles were classified in the coding process by identifying if the source was a: CEO, business owner, employed in a technology field, a marketing source, a lawyer, a type of research information, a blog, a website, another news media source, or none. It is imperative to identify the sources used in articles about social media since it is a relatively new form of communication and the experts on the topic are still becoming established. In the initial stages of a new phenomenon it can be hard to decipher whether the information presented on the topic is credible or not, and the sources cited in articles as credible experts on a topic can offer clues about the legitimacy of the content.

A source was categorized as a CEO if their title was listed as *President*, *CEO*, *CFO*, *Executive*, *Partner* or *Vice President*. The effectiveness of using an executive as a source for how to integrate social media into a communication plan could vary depending on the business. In some institutions the organizational structure can alienate a person of power from being in touch with day-to-day activities. The age of an individual holding a position of power which could be categorized as a CEO needs to factor into the source credibility. Oftentimes older individuals hold these types of positions and can be unfamiliar with how to use new forms of communication in effective ways. Conversely, while younger professionals possess the skills to implement social media plans, they often lack the ability to grasp the larger picture associated with the effects of that communication.

Business owners were identified as such if they were categorized as being a *Founder*, *Co-Founder*, *Owner* or *Co-Owner* of a business. The perspective of business owners is important when reading articles about how to use social media in the workplace because these individuals have a personal stake in the company. Oftentimes business owners are more driven and have a deeper willingness to search for new ways to develop new business ties.

Individuals in the technology field were coded as such if they were identified as holding a position in the Information Technology field, being employed by a technology company, or if they were identified as a technology analyst. Observations of individuals in the technology field should be considered when discussing elements of social media such as policies, regulations and the impact the communication tools can have on a company's technology infrastructure.

A source was coded as marketing if they were employed with a company that creates advertising, marketing, or held a marketing position within a company such as a *Director of Marketing* or *Vice President of Marketing*. While marketing professionals would appear to be the most logical and credible source for this topic, the information provided from the source should have a clear connection to the type of position that person holds or be based on past experiences.

Sources were categorized as legal if a lawyer or legal case was cited in the article. Legal cases provide insight into how social media are changing regulations and are altering the way business is conducted. Legal sources provide an insight unlike other sources because they are based on actual situations involving social media. Social media have been around long enough and are being used by enough people that the technology is entering the phase in its lifecycle where laws and regulations will be formed to aid in its use.

Sources were identified as being from the research category if information was included from study results, a research firm, a research analyst or scholarly research. Research based sources are often able to provide statistics and quantitative information on the topic, which is based on actual data. Readers should be mindful of potential research bias and verify the connection between the author and the research source to be sure the information is impartial. It is imperative to identify the source providing information on a topic from the perspective of an expert on the subject in order to recognize the credibility of the source as well as the content.

The remaining sources listed on the code sheet were corresponding to blogs, websites and alternate news media reports. Newspapers, magazines and business

publications were considered to be other news sources. Credibility of the news source cited in articles should be considered when interpreting the content. If the news source does not have a credible reputation, quotes or suggestions provided by them should be read with speculation.

Themes. Finally, emerging themes were coded for, some topics included were: social media as a marketing tool, social media used to promote an event, negative effects of social media on a company are presented, and regulations for social media are presented or suggested. These themes were selected for inclusion based on the prominence of the theme among academic research on the topic of social media. Article titles were also analyzed to identify possible themes and were included in the code sheet.

Results

Content Analysis

Source information. RQ1 asked about identifying the types of sources cited in articles regarding social media use for businesses. Both source type and type of example provided were coded during the analysis of content for this study. The profession of the individual being quoted in an article is important to identify in order to provide legitimacy to the content provided within the article. The field of employment or employment history of the source should be relevant to the topic of the information being provided in order to be considered a credible source. Additionally, the type of examples provided within the article act as a form of content credibility. Examples based on real uses of social media prove to be the most credible as they are based on a tested campaign or actual use of a specific platform. Articles containing general suggestions, or none at all, need to be read with more caution in order to identify if the information provided is

simply the opinion of the author, or if there is integrity behind the claims being made. Survey results provided in articles as the source of examples may appear to be credible, but the source of the survey and the connection of that source with the author must be taken into consideration in order to identify if the information is biased or not.

Source type was categorized based on the background of the individual cited providing information about how social media should be used in connection with a business. The source type was identified by the title of the source provided within the article corresponding to a quote, or based on the professional title of the author. Categorizing the source of “expert” information offered is relevant considering the current economic climate. Many businesses are struggling to make ends meet and maintain a presence among competition. Businesses are turning to social media as a low cost communication tool. Even though companies are turning to social media as a low cost alternative to traditional advertising, they often do not consider the actual costs of using social media. The salary or wages of the employee maintaining the social media content should be calculated as a part of the cost of using the technology because their time is being allocated to generating content.

It is imperative to identify how to appropriately use new communication tools and to pinpoint what kind of information is relevant for each platform in order to make the best use of the resources at hand. When suggestions are provided on how to use social media, the experience of the author must be taken into consideration in order to decipher if the recommendations are based on sound experience. Articles included in this study that did not provide sources which had relevant experience with social media often offered vague suggestions for use.

Types of sources provided. Individuals employed in the marketing field were the most frequently cited type of source in the content analyzed, with 27 articles referencing an individual employed in that field. A source was coded as marketing if they were employed with a company that creates advertising, marketing, or held a marketing position within a company such as a *Director of Marketing* or *Vice President of Marketing*. CEO's were the second most cited source in the articles selected with 20 of the 85 articles citing an individual with that position, such as the president and founder of Digital Culture Consulting, LLC ("Social Media is Having a Major Impact," 2011). A source was categorized as a CEO if their title was listed as *President*, *CEO*, *CFO*, *Executive*, *Partner* or *Vice President*. Research was the third most cited source with 18 of the articles referencing a study, an individual employed by a research firm, or a data analyst (see Table 1 for full results).

Table 1

Frequencies of Sources Cited

Employment Field	Total	Percentage (n = 85)
Marketing	27	31.76 %
CEO	20	23.53
Research	18	21.18
None	13	15.29
Business Owner	12	14.12
Legal	11	12.94

Type of publication. Social media should not be thought of as a one-size-fits-all kind of marketing plan. Companies need to categorize how the social media platforms are being used as well as the types of information available on them in order to identify if the

specific platform fits within the outlined communication plan of the business. The source of the information should possess some legitimate background or tested knowledge on the topic to be considered legitimate. Of the 85 articles selected for analysis, 46 were from a website source such as *Mashable.com*, *Huffingtonpost.com*, *thelawyer.com*, and *personneltoday.com*. Online newspapers and online magazines were the source types for 13 articles making them the second and third most frequent source types. It is important that information on how to use new technologies and tools are available to business owners and operators at all levels to ensure the media isn't creating a communication gap (see Table 2 for full results). The credibility of the publication should be taken into consideration when analyzing the credibility of the source of an article. If a publication is known for publishing articles which are not factually based or acknowledged as being credible bodies of information, readers must be aware of this when looking for suggestions on how to implement a new tool or execute a communication plan. The increase in technology tools has made it increasingly easier for almost anyone to create a website or publish something online.

Table 2

Frequencies of Publication Types

Type	Total	Percentage (n = 85)
Website	46	54.12%
Online Newspaper	13	15.29
Online Magazine	13	15.29
Business Publication	6	7.06

Type of examples provided. The majority of the examples provided about social media use by businesses were outlined with general examples or suggestions with 35 of

the 85 articles providing this type of example (see Table 3 for full results). The examples provided were not based on a campaign that was implemented, and did not provide advice specific to a particular platform. The suggestions provided in the majority of the articles were categorized as *general examples or suggestions*, these types of recommendations were identified as such if they were not based on any specific campaign or tested results. Statements such as “leverage social media sites to support the most important aspect of cold calling—targeting and preparation,” (Merrill, 2011) or “the laws and policies behind social media should set the groundwork for lawyers to advise their clients and employers to ensure they are traveling on the right social media path” (Ferachi, 2011) are examples of what was categorized as general examples or suggestions. Statements such as these provide an idea of what the author is suggesting for social media use, but there is no specific call to action or direction provided in the information presented. This kind of information can act as guidelines for business owners and professionals to use to strategically direct their company’s social media use. However, if the individual consulting these articles for assistance is unfamiliar with the territory of this type of communication platform and the appropriate uses, these kinds of suggestions may not be enough to provide a clear sense of direction.

Real examples of social media use were the second most frequently used type of examples provided in the content analyzed with 15 of the 85 articles referencing real campaigns or uses of the communication platforms. Real examples from business owners using social media were categorized as such when they referenced how the owner specifically uses the platforms, such as “I post on Facebook daily in relation to small business tax and business tips” (Khoo, 2011) or “I tweet every day about five to seven

times a day” (Khoo, 2011). Situations of actual employee use of social media were also categorized as real examples. If an article outlined a specific incident where and employee or business owner used social media in a particular way and then explained the results of that action it was characterized as a real example. Considering that the examples are based on a real company’s actual experience with social media, it allows other business owners with a similar type of company to implement a social media plan based on best practices. Providing real examples can also allow business owners to understand the possible risks and rewards associated with using this type of immediate communication. It should be maintained that while real examples are helpful, an example from a company operating in a different industry may not be able to be generalized and applied in another industry and yield the same results.

Thirteen of the 85 articles provided no examples of social media use. While this may appear surprising, the content of five of the 13 articles focused on the release of a new product or feature of an existing product and an example of social media use may not have been necessary for the context of the article. For the other eight articles which did not provide any examples of social media use, quotes were provided from professionals from varying fields, but the information available in the quotes appeared as more of statements of opinion on aspects of social communications. For example one quote provided in an article categorized as having no examples of social media use stated “neither tools nor people alone can solve the challenges of big data” (“Few Companies Use Data,” 2011). While this quote was relevant to the topic of managing the data that is populated through social media sites, the information provided in the article did not supply any information about how to use social media it merely shed light on other topics

related to the use of social media by businesses and what to do with the content available on these platforms.

Table 3

Frequencies of Types of Examples Provided

Type	Total	Percentage (n = 85)
General Example/Suggestion	36	42.35
Real Example/Suggestion	15	17.65
None	13	15.29
List of “How To” Items	10	11.76
Real Examples and List	8	9.41
Survey Results	3	3.53

The average story was between 500 and 1,119 words, which is long enough to provide a relevant context of the platform or application of the platform. Stories falling into a length category on the opposite ends of the spectrum suffered from providing either too little context or entirely too much content on the subject. The majority of the articles selected for analysis were categorized as being articles possessing news based information if the article focused on the results of a study, highlighted a new tool, or provided a new use of an existing tool. Stories that relayed a success or failure story on a specific company’s use of a platform or execution of a campaign was considered a feature.

Representation of social media in news media. RQ3 asked what news media are reporting regarding social media use for businesses. While Facebook was originally created to help college students keep in touch with each other and was eventually opened up to the public, businesses are attempting to use the Facebook model as a way to let

customers keep in touch with their favorite businesses much like they do with their favorite friends. Twitter allows users to post short messages containing 140 characters or less, links and images can be included in tweets. While Twitter is relatively new, it has been embraced by individuals associated with the news community as it is a way to quickly disperse information to a large community of people and is ideal for instances of emergency. Businesses are also attempting to find their place in the Twittersphere and create ways to use the communication platform to better their business models. Currently, no social media platform is designed to showcase businesses and allow them to interact with current and potential customers; instead businesses are trying to use preexisting tools to engage new audiences.

How social media is referenced. In 71 of the 85 articles selected for analysis in this study, when discussing social media use it was referenced simply as *social media* (see Table 4 for full results). While social media is considered to be a new form of communication, and many people are still trying to define how to use social media in an effective manner, it should be recognized that the term *social media* encompasses many different platforms. Providing examples of use under the blanket concept of social media does not provide the reader with the appropriate context in which they should operate on different platforms. Each social media platform has an intended use and has certain messages which are a better match for a one vehicle over another. Sixty of the 85 articles referenced Facebook specifically, and 58 of them referenced Twitter. *Social networking* was a term that was not originally coded for during analysis but appeared 14 times as a term that was used in articles when referencing social media.

Table 4

Frequencies of Terms Used to Identify Social Media in Articles

Term	Total	Percentage (n = 85)
Social Media	71	83.53
Facebook	60	70.59
Twitter	58	68.24
LinkedIn	18	21.18
Blog	14	16.47
Social Networking	14	16.47
Google+	10	11.76

Type of story presented. The manner in which social media was referenced in the articles selected varied drastically. Some articles expressed the publication's sentiment about social media within the headlines including: *Social media policies show lack of trust; Consumers want "free stuff" from social, marketers think they "want to be heard"; Leading the "lazy" generation; Why social media in the workplace is not the enemy, business benefits of staff usage, and The social media measurement smack down.* Based on the titles chosen to represent their articles, it appears that authors either love or hate social media. Those with an obviously negative tone included statements such as "It's true that social media remains in many ways a sort of Wild West. Many of the participants are shady, self-proclaimed experts and sometimes snake oil salesman, and paths are still being created" (Pick, 2011). Other negative statements included proclaiming social media is "an easy way to waste a lot of time" (Pick, 2011). A few articles attempted to highlight both the good and the bad of social media claiming that while "there are many positives that social media can bring to your business, some negatives also may arise, but even these can be good reasons to stay engaged and

involved” (“The State of Social Media,” 2011). Many articles took a positive spin to the integration of social media in the workplace providing quotes such as “people do business with people who they are friends with, and Facebook is a great way to get to know people, and allows people to see that I am a person” (Burnes, 2010).

The content used in this analysis covered an array of topics regarding social media use within businesses, 44 articles were categorized as either feature stories, 25 were stories that could be identified as “how to” articles, nine were stories on a specific company, and seven featured information on a new product or feature related to social media. One article highlighted a study conducted asking small business owners what kind of promotion is a “must” for their business, and 50 percent of businesses claimed they couldn’t live without word-of-mouth marketing (Barone, 2011a). The article further states that social media is “giving you the opportunity to maximize the same word-of-mouth advertising that small businesses have relied on for years” (Barone, 2011a). While some articles focused on the type of networking and branding opportunities available through social media, others narrowed in on the importance of all of the content found in social media. The conversations that social media users are having while logged in are rich with market data research. Several authors urged business owners to “listen carefully when they become the subject of discussion” (Gardner, 2011) because the consumers are having real-time conversations about products and brands online every day. Informing business owners that “it is important to have a presence where your consumers are spending time socializing” and that they “must learn to tap into the power of these networks to expand their customer bases, improve service, gain additional ways to

interact with and respond to customers, and obtain feedback in a timelier manner” (Gardner, 2011).

Apparent themes. RQ4 asked about identifying the themes apparent in news articles about social media use for businesses. Themes were coded for in the analysis of the content selected for this study to identify how the news media are framing the information presented about social media. The themes coded for include social media being presented as a customer service tool; a tool to promote an event; a marketing tool; a networking tool; as having a negative effect on a company; as a tool to aide in crisis; requiring regulations; as being necessary; as having privacy issues; identified as a form of WOM advertising; social media being handled externally; or as a tool for lead generation. A category of “other” was also coded for in order to help identify other themes present among the content that were not previously identified. The list of themes used in this study is not exhaustive of all of the apparent themes found in news media about social media, but it does provide a robust list of present themes.

Articles could be coded as having more than one theme present in a piece of content. In a situation where an article has more than one theme, a dominate theme was identified if one was mentioned more than another. Coding for “other” themes apparent in the articles used in this study yielded such themes as using social media as a tool for relationship building or customer engagement; how to measure social media to gauge return on investment; social media training for employees; conducting analysis of the information available on social media; and employee feedback or collaboration. The themes which appeared most often in coding were: social media being presented as

marketing or networking tools and presented as a necessary tool in the workplace (see Table 5 for full results).

Table 5

Frequencies of Themes Mentioned in Content

Theme	Total	Percentage (n = 85)
Marketing tool	35	41.18%
Networking tool	26	30.59
Necessary	19	22.35
Customer service tool	18	21.18
Negative effects on co.	17	20.00
Regulations	17	20.00
Word of Mouth	12	14.12
Relationship building/engagement	8	9.41
Measurement of social media	7	8.24
Social media training for employees	7	8.24
Data analysis of social media content	7	8.24

Note. Themes with less than 7 instances are not represented in this chart.

Marketing and networking. The most common recurring themes among the articles included in this study were those regarding using social media as marketing or networking tool. Articles were identified as possessing a theme indicating social media as a marketing tool, if statements were made or examples were given using social media to perform a task commonly executed through the use of a different marketing tactic. Social media has become a vital element of Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and while “links from authoritative websites are still of course an important signal of authority to search engines, social media links now play an increasingly essential role in these calculations” (Pick, 2011). Another article identified that “many small business owners find social media a cost-effective way to market their products/services and engage with prospects

and customers” (Khoo, 2011) hinting that social media can help aide in efforts which were previously reserved for traditional advertising. Some articles mention broad applications of social media as a marketing tool, leaving the interpretation of implementation up to the reader, such as “If your business is doing just fine and growing by leaps and bounds on its own...then maybe you don’t need social media. But otherwise, why would you say no to the cheapest most powerful kind of marketing today for your business” (“The State of Social Media,” 2011). While social media is still a new form of communication and should be explored through different applications in order to identify the most effective use, many articles offer social media as an alternative to traditional marketing.

Several articles encouraged business owners to use social media to network because a company can create a stronger community if they reach out to customers, and share information. Oftentimes the implementation is about “structuring, and in some cases restructuring how a business views and interacts with its customer base” (Maddock & Viton, 2009). Encouraging business owners to “learn to tap into the power of these networks to expand their customer bases, improve service, and gain additional ways to interact and respond to customers” (Maddock & Viton, 2009).

Presented as necessary. Statements implying that the use of social media is necessary in the work place took the form of proclamations such as “your customers are on social media, which means you need to be as well” (Barone, 2011a) or “chances are most of the businesses you interact with as a consumer are on social media” (Burnes, 2010). News media content is also providing statements to business owners that “social media marketing has gone well beyond the hype stage and is now mainstream business

practice” (Pick, 2011) and “not only do you need to add social media, but also commit to using them” (Maddock & Viton, 2009). While only a small number of companies are embracing social media, “the rest will need to get on board, whether they want to or not, because customers expect it” (Fluss & Rogers, 2010). Articles are informing business owners that “social media provides a powerful new tool to convert surfers into buyers” and that social media allows “marketers two things they couldn’t do before: scale one-to-one conversations, and publish their own content without a media partner” (Wasserman, 2011). Furthermore, “as businesses become increasingly global and competitive, social media is playing a major role because of its ability to bridge distances and enable the development of relationships” (“Social Media is Having a Major Impact,” 2011)

Customer service tool. “What social media can do is make you a better company by allowing you to listen, react and build faster and more efficiently than ever before” (Barone, 2011b). Companies are beginning to understand that they need to communicate more through social media not just talking, but listening to what customers have to say. Social media offers an “additional avenue to show off and talk about your product in a friendly and informal way” (Barone, 2011b). Social media allows business to “have the opportunity to answer questions, show features, and offer ‘how-to’ information to help people get to know you better” (Barone, 2011b). Businesses can reality-test a product or service even before launch with the help of social media businesses can “monitor the social channel to identify changing perceptions, waxing or waning demand, and the presence of emerging competitors” (DiMauro, 2011).

Negative effects of social media on a business. Social media is an instant form of communication and businesses need to be aware of how quickly messages can be

dispersed via this type of communication. “Social media can cause indigestion for employers and employees alike; you see athletes and all sorts of people getting themselves into trouble with it because you tend to shoot from the hip” (Goodison, 2011). Although “many companies have begun to embrace social media in the workplace, there are organizations that still may block it from employees over concerns of how they might express themselves on social networks” (Lytle, 2011). A nightmare scenario that many business owners and marketers fear is “that maverick employee who creates embarrassing scenes on his or her personal social media accounts” (Shorr, 2012). Oftentimes when “reputation management is considered it has to do with external sources,” however, “employees can, in fact, do a lot of damage to a firm’s reputation if things are not managed” (Shorr, 2011). Although comments can often be deleted from social media sites, if one person documents the slip-up then it may as well have been left up for the world to see. One article references an instance when an intoxicated business owner flocked to the company social media site and posted a comment that should have never been posted. “The postings were deleted, but at least one person preserved a screenshot of the freewheeling diatribe to be viewed in perpetuity” (Shlachter, 2011). The tricky thing about communication is that whether electronic or verbal, once it’s been spoken or written, it is almost impossible to take it back.

Regulations for social media use presented. The verdict appears to still be out on whether businesses should implement social media policies or not. Some feel that “having a policy on social media use is an unrealistic way to attempt to control staff and displays a lack of trust” (Brockett, 2011). With professionals using social media more, others feel that “companies lack sufficient policies to ensure proper usage, and they have

even less formal training in how to use social media to achieve their business goals” (May, 2011). To handle misuse “companies need to develop policies governing use of social media that restricts certain content including personnel matters, contract negotiations and corporate policies” (“Social Media is Having a Major Impact,” 2011). “It comes as a surprise that the employees most likely to be fired, fined, disciplined or even jailed for something said in social media is a school teacher, followed by nurses and healthcare workers; with public employees (firefighters, police officers, and court clerks) close behind” (Coursey, 2012).

Ownership of the actual social media accounts has recently been brought to light as another issue that businesses need to be aware of. “Many people have created ad hoc social media accounts to promote both their companies and their personal lives” (Shanahan, 2011) but if a “company finds that its presence on Twitter or other social media outlets is supporting the business, then it should take steps to preserve this goodwill” (Shanahan, 2011). Access to social media accounts has also been called into question, with recent reports “that employers are requiring potential employees to disclose their social media account names and passwords as a part of the employment screening process” (Stephens, 2011). While this may appear to be a horrific violation of privacy, some employers claim this is the best way to really get to know an employee; the legal decision has yet to be made.

Interviews

RQ2 asked where business owners getting information on how to use social media. The local businesses that participated in the research for this study were asked questions in an attempt to pinpoint where they get their inspiration on how to use social

media for their business, what type of information they post on their social media accounts, and what their perception is of how new media presents social media use by businesses. It is integral to determine the types of content present on actual business's social media accounts and categorize the information to identify if there were any themes among the content. Participants were also asked if they outline any goals and how the successes of the social media campaigns are measured, if at all.

Participant A is a store manager for a small retail jewelry store in downtown Baltimore that has approximately three employees, two full-time and one part-time. Participant B is the owner of a bakery that has both a brick and mortar location, as well as a mobile truck used to sell items around the city. Participant C is the owner of a small confectionary retail store located in northern Baltimore County. Participant D is the owner of an established pie shop in downtown Baltimore that she and her husband recently purchased. Participant E is the owner of a retail store located in the Canton neighborhood of Baltimore that specializes in items that reflect the culture of the city. Participant F is the owner of a restaurant chain he started in 2005 that now has three locations. Participant G is a co-owner of an independent bookstore located in northern Baltimore City. Participant H is the marketing manager and wife to the co-owner of a local party and event rental company. Participant I is the owner, creative mind, and creator of items for a clothing shop; she refers to her operation as a one-woman sweatshop. Participant J is the marketing and communications graduate assistant in the student affairs office of a university.

Social media platforms used by businesses. The participants selected for this study were owners or co-owners of local businesses representing retail, food/restaurant,

special events, and educations sectors. All of the businesses included in the study had established Facebook and Twitter accounts for their company. Participant A, the jewelry store, and Participant F, the multi-location restaurant, have Pinterest accounts in order to display images from events featuring the company, to highlight products they sell, or to display what was a source of inspiration for a new product. The jewelry store, the multi-location restaurant and the clothing shop all mentioned they had email platforms and a database of subscribers who opted in to receive their e-communications.

Motivation for creating social media account. When asked what prompted them to start a social media account for their business the responses varied drastically. The jewelry store manager stated that she started a social media account for the business because she was “passionate about social media and am more tech savvy than the owner” she also “felt it would be a good fit for the business.” Participant B, the baker, has a brick and mortar store as well as a food truck, and the social media sites were created for the business “as a suggestion by my younger nieces who love social media” but she stuck to it and “made social media work for the company by using it to connect with members of the community to let them know where the food truck would be stationed for the day.” Several of the companies mentioned starting a social media account for the business based on the suggestion of an employee, a family member or friend, or because they understand the importance of connecting with people on social media. The multi-location restaurant owner, who has a strong presence on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Pinterest has a personal passion for social media and uses social media to engage fans and followers in active conversations about topics relating to the company’s products. He identifies that “social media is an important aspect of business, and allows you to connect

with people in a way not possible through other channels.” The retail confectionary store owner noted that “using social media is a lot easier to update than changing the website all of the time, and it’s a lot cheaper because I can do it myself.”

Content available on social media sites. Every business classified as a retail outlet mentioned that they post information about new products or merchandise on their social media accounts. The baker which has a mobile food truck uses social media to let fans and followers know where the truck will be parked that day. Six of the businesses post specials or discount offers on their social media sites. Some post a code word that must be mentioned when the customer visits the store in order to receive the discount. The clothing store sells products online and posts promotional codes on social media to entice fans and followers to visit the website to shop. Further stating that when she posts “anything about a sale, I definitely see a spike in traffic.” The retail store in Canton sparingly uses social media, and focuses more on pushing people to sign up for the e-mails that are sent out about the company. She likes to use social media to “post discount offers, or let people know about cool events that are going on in the community to entice them to come into the store and shop around while they are hanging out.”

Others use the social media accounts to push slow moving inventory at a discounted rate. The baker said that she “only sells products that were created within a 24-hour timeframe” and when the window of freshness closes in she simply “posts on the store’s social media sites that the products are now available as a discounted rate, and you can just watch the cars pull into the parking lot.” Five of the businesses mentioned using social media to host a contest or to ask fans and followers for their input on new products. The confectioner likes to use social media to create impromptu focus groups stating that

she likes “to invite the store’s social media friends to come in and test drive new flavors of products and give us feedback, it’s a great way to forecast how the products will move.”

Social media sites were used to post information on events and local information for three of the businesses. Participant H rents items to be used for special events and uses social media more as a way to “connect with people who will use our services, and showcase what we are capable of as a company.” Elaborating that she likes “to post pictures of events that feature our products because this is such a small close-knit community and people talk, so it’s nice to try to get yourself to be a topic of conversation.” The pie shop owner uses social media to “inform members of the neighborhood what is going on in our store.” Stating that her store “often features live music, and once you get people in the door, they are likely to buy something.” The bookstore co-owner said he uses social media to “post anything cool that we can think of,” further elaborating that “we just want to keep people engaged in a good conversation, and keep our company top of mind.”

Inspiration for social media content. When asked where they get information on what to do on social media for a business, most participants mentioned that they have personal experience using social media and they typically post things on social media that they would like to see from other businesses. Participant J stated that she and the other members of her team get most of their “information through personal use as well as from mass media. Some staff read blogs on sites like Mashable to get information.” The multi-location restaurant owner claimed that he likes to operate solely on “trial and error,” he often tries to “think of something that would be different and engage users and just give it

a shot.” The baker and the pie shop owner both said they browse other company’s social media sites then select the things the company has done that are appealing to them and they try it out for their own company’s social media. The baker stated that “if it doesn’t pop and catch my eye, I don’t waste my time trying it on my customers. Not only am I busy but I’m sure they have a million things they are trying to do as well, and the last thing I am trying to do on social media is hard sell someone on my product.”

The bookstore co-owner stated that he “never reads any news articles or blog posts about how to use social media” he feels that the content is “written for people who have no clue about social media.” Furthermore, “if the person reading the article has no idea how to use social media then they probably shouldn’t be wasting their time trying to make a presence on social media just because they think they need to have a page.” The jewelry store manager claimed she doesn’t refer to news media for ideas on how to use social media either and that “if you are at the point where you want to create a social media presence for your business, and you feel you need to read news articles in order to figure out how to use the tools, you may want to ask yourself again why you want to be on social media.” The retail store owner felt reluctant to even create a social media presence for her company, but a younger employee encouraged her to do so. She later attended a conference for her industry and sat in on a seminar about how and why to use social media for your business and she was “totally on board to at least give social media a shot after hearing about how engaged fans and followers can be and how that can translate into sales.” The event rental company claims, “There are a lot of conflicting ideas out there. And a lot of people are talking about how to use Twitter versus how to use Facebook, for example that you shouldn’t be sharing the same content on both sites.

For us, I don't believe this makes sense. Our Twitter followers and our Facebook fans are not likely to be one in the same."

Customer service tool. Using social media as a customer service tool appeared in 21 percent of the articles selected for analysis in this study. The consensus among the interview participants appeared to be that while they did not intend to use their social media sites as a customer service tool they do not decline to provide customer service to those who reach out via social media. The jewelry store manager, the confectionary store and the bookstore co-owner all mentioned that customers have contacted them via social media to inquire about the availability of a product. The baker mentioned that one time a "customer went through the effort of finding us on Facebook and friending us, only to complain about a flavor of a cupcake they had recently purchased." As if that isn't surprising enough, by the time the owner had taken the time to attempt to craft a polite response, she stated that "another customer took to my defense and supported not only the product, but the brand. Now that is what it's all about, building relationships with people who truly care. "

Goals and measurement. Several companies identified that they don't have any goals and are not measuring their social media efforts on anything other than the fact that people are engaged and responding to the information they are posting. The bookstore co-owner has a goal of "being cool and being a brand that people want to associate with. Every time we post something we aim to get people to interact with us and identify that there is a person behind the brand." The owner of the confectionary store started out with goals associated to the number of posts and tweets they ideally wanted to get out in a specific time frame. After realizing that was "an ambitious goal, and probably not the

most effective one, we changed gears and focused more on posting information that fans and followers wanted to hear and interact with.” The clothing store owner set the goal of “getting more word-of-mouth customers and to keep people interested and reminded of my company on a daily basis.” The graduate assistant in the student affairs office set the goal to “be present where our audience is and to maintain a presence that allows us to stay top of mind.” While several of the companies had goals in place, there didn’t appear to be any sort of effective measurement tool in place to identify if the tactics being implemented were actually working.

Discussion

With the introduction and acceptance of most new things, there will be both early adopters and laggards. The phenomena created by the introduction of social media makes it undeniable that social media is an important communication tool. Articles analyzed in this study offered a wide variety of ways in which social media can be integrated into an organization. But the issue remains that social media, much like any communication tool, will not yield the same results for every business, nor should it be used the same way for every business. Businesses need to evaluate the skill of the staff on hand as well as the content relevant to the company in order to identify if social media is in fact a good fit for them.

Sources

Marketing, CEOs and research were the three most cited sources among the content included for analysis in this study. The background of a source providing expert information should be taken into consideration when processing the suggestions offered about how to use social media. The evolution of technology has allowed for content

typically generated by news organizations and large corporations to be distributed by others, thus removing the need for readers to seek out the original source of information (Picard, 2009). This makes the credibility of the sources included in articles even more important. It should also be acknowledged that since the use of social media is still so new and evolving all the time, so will the sources of expertise on the topic. While technological advancements have made it easier for individuals to fact check the information they find online (Orange, 2011), determining the quality of online posts can be tedious (Chatterjee, 2011).

Where Businesses Learn How to Use Social Media

Many of the participants interviewed in this study stated they do not consult news or online media as a source of information when trying to figure out a new way to use social media. The businesses included in this study relied heavily on other businesses, employees, friends and family for input and feedback on how they use social media for their business. Viewing the profile of a business or user can outline source credibility with the history of engagement within social networking sites, including the number of connections and posts (Chatterjee, 2011). Many business owners identified their peers as the most credible sources of information. This opinion reinforces the social information processing theory in the fact that business owners are turning to other businesses in order to find out what has and has not worked on social media for them. They then take those opinions and evaluate how to make the suggestions work within their own business model. This could also be due to the fact staffing pressures are eroding the ability to verify information before it is disseminated via online channels which affects the quality of the information posted (Singer & Ashman, 2009).

How News Media Reference Social Media

Social Media, *Facebook* and *Twitter* were the three terms most often used when referencing social media use for businesses in the articles selected for this study. It is concerning that news media is referencing social media as a whole when giving advice for implementation, instead of focusing on a specific platform and offering advice on a more strategic level. The rapid surge of new technologies can be considered overload and a critical transformation is occurring with communication tools that is important for companies and organizations to understand (Orange, 2011). Considering the large number of platforms available for communication, more targeted information should be provided to help business owners cut through the clutter. It is imperative to understand how and why they should be using social media based on real information from credible sources.

The easy access and low cost associated with these tools makes it difficult to identify legitimate stories of success and pertinent examples. While there will always be a residual capabilities gap between technologies being created and the rate of implementation, the decision making processes of even the most nimble of companies struggle to keep up (Day, 2011). More in-depth and insightful information should be provided to business owners about how to use social media as well as justifications for why the news media presents social media as necessary to be used by a business. Perhaps if the news media were providing more in-depth analyses of how to use specific social media platforms, then business owners would actually consider consulting these sources for information on how to use new tools or how to make existing ones work for their company.

Themes in News Media About Social Media Use

Marketing and networking tool. The most frequently referenced theme among the articles included in this study was to use social media as marketing or networking tools. Articles were identified as possessing a theme indicating social media as a marketing tool, if statements were made or examples were given using social media to perform a task commonly executed through the use of a different marketing tactic. Social networking sites function as channels for interaction between companies and their consumers, helping to transmit company brand value (Lin & Lu, 2011). Social media can provide organizations with the opportunity to strategically network and close deals based on shared interests and personal engagement with previously unattainable audiences (Campbell, 2010). Businesses need to learn how to harness the power of social networks to expand their customer bases, improve service and gain additional ways to interact with and respond to customers (Fluss & Rogers, 2010). The overall consensus of articles that referenced social media as marketing or networking tools, hinted at the fact that social media can help aid in efforts which were previously reserved for traditional advertising. Most interview participants noted that they use social media because it offers a form of free or cheap marketing for their brand. Several stated that they use social media for their business because a lot of the people on social media are potential customers. Considering they are running a business and are most likely updating the social media as well, it allows them to personally interact with the customers or potential customers, and build a personality with their brand.

Presented as being necessary. Considering there are several levels of acceptance of new technology such as innovators, early adopters and laggards, it is interesting that

social media is being presented as necessary in some articles. Articles were identified as presenting social media as necessary when they included statements such as “the rest of the companies will need to get on board, whether they want to or not, because customers expect it” (Fluss & Rogers, 2010). Or “social media has gone well beyond the hype stage, and is now mainstream business practice” (Fluss & Rogers, 2010). Statements such as these can lead business owners that the use of social media may be greater than it actually is among businesses. Few studies have been conducted on traditional mass media’s agenda setting ability in citizen-controlled Internet spaces. The need for orientation through media, fueled by the drive to belong, often causes individuals to learn and adopt the agenda of the group (Ragas & Roberts, 2009).

Customer service tool. Using social media as a form of a customer service tool was the third most frequent theme among the articles selected for inclusion in this study. Social response theory, which suggests that people treat computers as social actors even when they know they do not possess human traits, offers directions in answering marketing questions about the effectiveness of website social cues (Moon, 2000). Customization is identified as treating customers differently based on feedback from interactions, and a customer-driven individualization of the web experience (Hill & Moran, 2011). The customization of social networking sites is the ultimate form of differentiation, as organizations use these tools to tailor products, as well as the consumption built upon experience based on unique needs. Social media can make a company better by allowing them to listen, react and build faster and more effectively than ever. Companies are beginning to understand that they need to communicate more through social media, not only through talking, but listening to what customers have to

say about their products or services. Several of the interview participants noted that if a customer contacts them via social media with a question, they will field it via the same channel, but that was not a conscious intention of using social media.

Negative effects of social media on a company. Social media is an instant form of communication and businesses need to be aware of how quickly messages can be dispersed via this type of communication. Companies wanting to participate in public relations and marketing efforts on social media have to be mindful of the culture on the particular platform on which they are communicating (Vorvoreanu, 2009). The organization's communication with its publics on different social media must conform to the respective social norms of that platform. Failure to adapt communication efforts to the social norms presents the risk of failed communication efforts. As communication blocks get shorter, and there are fewer contextual clues, the ability to perceive tone diminishes, requiring messages to be clearer and more direct (Junco & Chickering, 2010). The larger picture painted in articles possessing this theme was that businesses need to be cautious of how and what they post on social media sites because once communication is out there, you cannot take it back. The interview participants only mentioned time as a negative effect on the company. Finding the time to manage and populate social media with relevant information that would engage the users proved to be the most difficult part of implementing social media. Several interview participants noted that they tacked the duty of maintaining the social media onto the workload of one of their stronger employees, or they are managing the content themselves.

Policies and regulations. While several articles included in the content analysis portion of this study referenced that businesses need to adopt policies and regulations for

social media use within the workplace, the interview participants did not express the same sentiment. This could be due to the fact that many of the participants of this study were the business owner of a company with a staff between two and eight people who are often handpicked for employment and they did not feel the need to implement such policies and regulations because the mentality of the employees was in-line with that of the owners. Many of the participants in this study thought that trying to regulate what people say on social media contradicted why you would be using social media in the first place.

Conclusion

Since information was gathered from various publication types about social media as a broad concept and how it is presented among various types of news media it is hard to draw a solid conclusion about how social media is being presented by the news media. Based on the information gathered through this study, the news media appears to be framing social media as the next technological advancement that will change the way we do business, much like when email made its mark on the business world. However, business owners do not consult the news media at all when deciding how to use social media for their company because they do not value the information presented. The overall consensus of the participants of this study was that their peers were the best source of information on how to effectively use the new communication tools because the feedback provided from them was genuine and relevant to their company.

Limitations and Future Research

There is little research available on the topic of analyzing the content found in the news about social media. Many studies have focused on the content found on a

company's actual social media site (Greer & Ferguson, 2011; Papacharissi, 2007). The code sheet used during the analysis portion of this study was not exhaustive, which could result in not gathering an accurate depiction of social media in the news. Additionally, SPSS was not used to measure the significance of the results gathered. Finally, the small sample size used in this study may not be large enough to create an accurate portrayal of how social media use for businesses is being suggested. The businesses selected for participation in this study were relatively small and consisted of two to eight employees total, which could have an impact on how and where research on how to use new communication tools is conducted. None of the companies included in this study possess a marketing department or a team of individuals dedicated specifically to the promotion and advertising of the company.

Future studies could expand upon the direction of this study and could include larger companies in the interview portion to identify if individuals who are employed within the marketing field utilize resources differently. Considering the overall consensus of the business owners who participated in this study do not refer to news media about how to use social media for their company, it would be interesting to interview some of the authors of the articles about how businesses should be using social media to see who they are generating the content for. This type of study could help to identify the circle of influence among the social media community, and recognize who is influencing how social media is used as well as what kind of information should be shared by whom.

Appendix A

Interview Questions

I will be recording this interview, is that ok with you?

Background Information

1. In what industry does your company operate?
2. Does your company have a website?
3. Which social media platforms do you use to promote your company?
4. Who manages your business's social media account?
5. How often are your social media accounts updated?
6. What is the average age range of your employees? Customers?

Questions

1. Where are you getting information about what to do on social media? Other businesses? Friends? Personal use?
2. When gathering information about how to use social media, how do you judge if the source is credible and able to offer sound advice? (ie. Presence on social media, academic credentials, professional position, etc.
3. What kind of information do you post on your company's social media account?
4. What is your goal of having a company presence on social media?
5. Have you noticed any change in traffic or sales since you created your social media site?
6. What made you create a social media presence for your company?
7. Do you offer special discounts or information exclusively via social media?

8. Do you use social media to provide customer service? If so, how? What made you incorporate this option into your business model?
9. Do your customers reference your social media presence when they are shopping in your store? Such as talk about content appearing on the site, or what they would like to see?
10. Do you think the age of your customers or employees influences how you use social media?
11. Do you measure the success of a social media campaign? Why or why not? How?
12. Are you connected with other businesses via social media? Does the way in which businesses you are connected with use social media influence what you do with your businesses' social media site?
13. Where do you turn to find information about how to use social media tools?
14. What makes a publication source credible to you to provide information on how to use social media?
15. Do you ever take advice from friends/family/customers about how to use social media? Why?
16. What is your perception of how the media is suggesting businesses owners incorporate social media into their daily operations?

Appendix B

Code Sheet

CODE SHEET: THESIS CONTENT ANALYSIS

Article #	Month	Year

1. SOURCE TYPE

Circle corresponding source type for the publication. (1=circled, 0=not circled)

1	Blog	5	Online Magazine
2	Newspaper	6	Business Publication
3	Online Newspaper	7	Website
4	Magazine	8	Other

2. NEWSPAPER SECTION

If the source is a newspaper, circle the section in which the article appeared. (1=circled, 0=not circled)

1	Business	5	Education
2	Finance	6	Science
3	Technology	7	Other:
4	News	8	N/A

3. LENGTH OF STORY (1=circled, 0=not circled)

1	Long (More than 1200 words)
2	Medium (500-1199 words)
3	Short (499 words or less)

4. TYPE OF STORY (1=circled, 0=not circled)

1	Story on a specific company
2	News about a new product or feature
3	How To
4	Feature

5. TYPE OF EXAMPLES PROVIDED (1=circled, 0=not circled)

1	Real examples of SM use
2	List of "How To" items
3	Both—real examples and a list
4	General examples/suggestions
5	None
6	Survey results of SM use study

Circle the ways social media was referenced in the article. Place a "D" next to the dominate medium. (1=circled, 0=not circled)

6.	Social Media	11.	Google+
7.	Facebook	12.	Blog
8.	Twitter	13.	Website
9.	YouTube	14.	Foursquare
10.	Linkedin	15.	Other:

SOURCES CITED IN THE STORY

Circle sources cited in the article. Place a "D" next to the dominate source type in each article. Place an "A" next to the type of the source if they were the author of the article. (1=circled, 0=not circled)

16.	CEO (ex: President, CEO, CFO, Executive, General MGR)	21.	RESEARCH (ex: Study Results, Research Firm, Research Analyst, Scholarly Research)
17.	BUSINESS OWNER (ex: Founder, Co-Founder, Owner, Co-Owner)	22.	BLOG (Please list Blog Name or Type)
18.	TECHNOLOGY FIELD (ex: IT position, Technology Company, Tech Analyst)	23.	WEBSITE (Please list site Name or Type)
19.	MARKETING (ex: Advertising/MKTG Firm, VP Marketing, Dir MKTG)	24.	ANOTHER NEWS MEDIA REPORT (ex: Newspaper, Magazine, Business Publication-Print or Online)
20.	LEGAL (ex: Lawyer, legal case)	25.	NONE (ex: No sources were cited in the article)
26.	Other:		

THEMES IDENTIFIED IN ARTICLES

Each story may have more than one theme. Circle all themes which appear in the article. Place a "D" next to the Dominant Theme. (1=circled, 0=not circled)

27.	Used as a Customer Service Tool	28.	To Promote an Event, or Relay Event Details
29.	Used as a Marketing Tool	30.	Used as a Networking Tool
31.	Negative Effects of SM on a Company	32.	Used as a Tool to Aide in Crisis
33.	Regulations for SM are Presented	34.	Social Media Presented as Being "Necessary"
35.	Privacy Issues Related to SM	36.	Used as a Tool for Word-Of-Mouth Advertising
37.	To Handle SM Internally or Externally	38.	Used as a Tool for Lead Generation
39.	Other:		

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