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GENERATION X AND FACEBOOK:

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OF GENERATION X ON FACEBOOK

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DAVID KELSO SPRADLING III

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GENERATION X AND FACEBOOK: AN EXAMINATION OF THE BEHAVIORAL
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BY

Dr. Jaime Loke, Chair

Dr. Elanie Steyn

Dr. Ralph Beliveau

Dedication:

This thesis is dedicated to two great Sooners; my Father, LTC(r) David Kelso Spradling II who taught me how to Press On and my Grandfather, David Kelso Spradling ESQ. who told me to make him proud.

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Abstract

Mobile internet technologies and social media have radically altered the media landscape, and traditional media outlets are experimenting with ways to more efficiently reach and connect with audiences. Social media offers media outlets an opportunity and space to strengthen relationships with audiences while delivering content across multiple modalities and platforms.

This study, through an online survey, open-ended questions, and focus group sessions, offers an examination of the cognitive and behavioral engagements of Generation X on Facebook through a uses and gratifications perspective. Results indicate Generation X uses Facebook for information seeking and to strengthen and maintain current relationships but seems willing to interact with media outlets in the same space. This willingness to connect represents an opportunity for traditional media managers to reach this socially and economically vital age group and develop brand-loyal relationships.

Keywords: Generation X, Facebook, Uses and Gratifications, Engagement

Introduction

Generation X will save the world. When the dust of the battle for attention and generational supremacy between millennials and baby boomers begins to settle, it will be Generation X that rolls up its sleeves and gets things back on track. They play hard, they work hard, and they know how to get things done (White & White, 2014).

They are resilient, industrious and a seriously tech-savvy generation (Mortimer, 2014). Gen X spends more time on social media; Facebook is the Gen X platform of choice, than their baby boomer parents and their millennial children (Casey, 2017). Social media just the latest iteration of an internet they helped build (Honan, 2011).

Generation X matters too. Recent market research shows Generation X is a financially critical generation with considerable decision-making influence over other age groups (Peralta, 2015; Taylor & Gao, 2014). This important segment of society is spending significant amounts of time engaging with friends, family, and even commercial/retail pages on a revolutionary communication platform and these activities are widely ignored by academic and commercial researchers alike.

Facebook is an innovative communication platform that has changed our lives, our culture, and the way we communicate. As of 2014, Facebook created almost \$230bn in economic impact and 4.5 million jobs, worldwide each year (Deloitte, 2015). The social giant has indirectly created millions of jobs in an entirely new sector of marketing and advertising. This revolutionary social communication platform has changed how political campaigns are run and won, changed our views on privacy, even changed our definition of the word “friend” (Elgot, 2015). From the Arab Spring in 2011 and protests in Ukraine in 2013 (Elgot, 2015) to the Women’s March on Washington in

2017 (Stein, 2017), Facebook has been instrumental in organizing significant world moments.

Generation X, a socially and economically significant age group, is spending considerable time on a revolutionary communication platform. Perhaps because millennials make convenient samples for university-based studies, academic researchers have largely overlooked Generation X and their social media behavior. Additionally, in a concerted effort to influence the buying decisions of younger consumers who have decades of purchasing power ahead of them, marketing researchers have mostly ignored this age group as well (Klara, 2016).

This study represents an attempt to begin to fill the gap in our collective understanding of Generation X and its engagements with Facebook. In so doing, the purpose is to extend the literature into little-explored areas, further our insights into the online habits of a critical generation, and provide a basis for traditional mass media outlets to more effectively reach this important audience. To that end, the following pages will make the case that Generation X is: (a) a socially and economically critical generational cohort with considerable decision-making influence over other generations, (b) spending significant amounts of time on a revolutionary communication platform, (c) and in order to market, communicate and interact with this age group on this platform it would be helpful to know more about why they use Facebook, what they expect from that use, and what content types they are most likely to engage. Finally, (d) the Uses and Gratifications perspective on media research is the appropriate theoretical framework through which to make such an examination.

Generation X, roughly speaking anyone between 35 and 55 (Strauss & Howe, 1992), is a small population (Lamotte, 2014; Robinson, 2014). At approximately 65 million, Generation X is a smaller group than baby boomers; at just over 75 million (U.S. Census, 2015) or millennials; the largest at over 80 million (U.S. Census, 2015). However, Generation X represents a strong link between them (Taylor & Gao, 2014). Generation X falls between baby boomers and millennials on considerably more factors than just age. For instance, Generation X is racially and culturally more diverse than baby boomers but less so than millennials. They are more politically conservative than millennials but less so than baby boomers. Whether education, religious affiliation, views on government and immigration, or a wide assortment of other variables, Generation X represents a “...straight line bridge between two noisy behemoths” (Taylor & Gao, 2014, para. 1).

Considering diversity, it should be noted that while claims of greater racial and cultural diversity among Generation X may be true, neither necessarily equates to growth in racial representation. In fact, in terms of media representations of this age group, the picture is fairly monochromatic. Ortner (1998) notes, “...the actual Generation X public culture, the journalism, the novels, the films, is almost entirely white” (p. 421).

However, this uneven representation in the cultural image of Generation X does not diminish the fact that this age group is socially and economically critical. The nature of the family unit is changing as millennials return home in record numbers, and baby boomers are living longer than expected (Martin, 2016). Generation X is, in increasing numbers, financially supporting family members on "both sides of the generational

divide" (Martin, 2016, p. 3). This position between these two other generations, across a variety of variables, affords Generation X considerable decision-making influence over both millennials and baby boomers (Taylor & Gao, 2014).

Generation X also controls a healthy share of marketplace power. Gen X represents only 25 percent of the population yet holds more than 30 percent of total income dollars (Bedgood, 2016). More than 50 percent of startup founders are Generation X (Martin, 2016). These facts and the decision making influence Generation X also wields, means they may be small, but Generation X is an influential and underappreciated age group (Peralta, 2015).

Tech-savvy Generation X is very active in the digital space as well. Some reports have Generation X spending more than 5 hours per day connected to the internet, engaging in a variety of functions (Mander 2015). According to a Nielson Company report, Generation X spends more time on social media than baby boomers or millennials, more than 7 hours a week (Casey, 2017). According to London-based Global World Index, an internet, and technology research firm, Facebook is the "dominant force" in meeting Generation X's social media needs (Mander, 2015, p. 28). The generation that first realized the power of the internet seems hooked on Facebook (Malone, 2014). Social media use among Generation X has become so prolific that 80 percent of Gen X reports using additional screens or devices to access the internet or social media while watching traditional television, a practice known as "second screening" (Mander 2015).

Generation X is indeed engaging across Facebook in significant numbers. In the U.S. the average Facebook user is almost 42 years old (Phillips, 2014). According to

Statista.com (2017), Gen X represents more than 58 million internet users in the United States; this number is significant given the approximately 65 million Gen X'ers in total; and 85 percent, almost 50 million, of those Generation X internet users have an active Facebook account.

The history of their favorite social media platform is well documented. Launched in 2004 (Carlson, 2010) Facebook has grown, in a relatively short time, to more than 1.5 billion active daily users and more than 1.8 billion active monthly users (Statista.com, 2017). Facebook offers multi-modal communication without space or time constraints and has significantly impacted human interpersonal exchanges in a relatively short period (Gross, 2014). Facebook allows users to communicate via text, audio, or video. Users can interact live or later, to the whole world or just one friend, and, with the near ubiquity of mobile devices, they can use Facebook almost anywhere on earth (Ferrucci & Tandoc, 2015; Smock, Ellison, Lampe, & Wohn, 2011).

With close to two billion users and a nearly \$10 billion profit in 2016 (Roettgers, 2017) Facebook has become, unquestionably, a big deal. By a wide margin, they are the largest in terms of active users (Statista.com, 2017). Further, the next two most sizeable social media platforms are WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger with more than one billion monthly users each. Facebook, who owns both WhatsApp and Messenger, controls almost 80 percent of worldwide instant messaging (Goodwin, 2016). Recently, at F8, Facebook's annual developer conference, CEO Mark Zuckerberg noted that users send around 60 billion messages across Facebook networks, every day (Shahani, 2016).

Based on previous work in this and other emergent media, the Uses and Gratifications perspective on media research is an appropriate lens for an examination of Generation X and their engagements on Facebook (Dolan, Conduit, Fahy, & Goodman, 2015). Uses and gratifications, “a psychological communications perspective” (Rubin, 2009, p. 165) is a theoretical framework that focuses on motivations and expectations that cause media users to seek out specific media to satisfy specific needs (Blumler, 1979; Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973; Papacharissi, 2009; Ruggiero, 2000). Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1973) further noted that the uses and gratifications perspective attempts to explain what motivates people to use media to meet both social and psychological needs and goals.

Audiences motivated to use media to meet goals and fulfill needs indicates an, at least, variably active audience (Rubin, 2009). The primary assumption of the uses and gratifications approach, that of an active audience, is appropriate to this research setting because social media audiences are considered more active than traditional media users (Humphreys, 2016).

To connect uses and gratifications with social media engagement; Mittal et al. (2010) noted that behavioral engagements with social media result from “motivational drivers” (p. 254). Further, the motivational influences that drive these behavioral engagements are consistent with “the theoretical underpinning of UGT” (Dolan, Conduit, Fahey, & Goodman, 2015, p. 5). When social media audiences use Facebook and behaviorally engage with the platform by commenting, “Liking,” sharing, or any of the variety of other functions available, their contributions facilitate the further engagement of other users, thus, exponentially expanding the reach of the company or

marketer originating the message. As a result, organizations and marketers try to encourage their users to engage with their content behaviorally and not consume it passively (Dolan et al., 2015). A more in-depth understanding of these motivational drivers and the behavioral engagements they lead to is an important step in effectively communicating with Generation X on Facebook.

While social media engagement is defined functionally (Humphreys, 2016; Li, Berens, & de Maertelaere, 2013; Lim, Hwang, & Biocca, 2015) scholars and researchers have also noted there are cognitive aspects of engagement. Calder, Malthouse, and Schaedel (2009) argued that engagement goes beyond basic behavioral functions and engagements but refers to a collection of the users' total experience with that site. Paek, Hove, Jung, and Cole (2013) noted the media experiences that make up media engagement are similar to the "gratifications at the heart of the uses and gratifications approach to media research..." (p. 83). Smith and Gallicano (2015) also separated the use of social media tools with actual social media engagement saying the two are often used interchangeably but are "conceptually distinct" (p. 83). Engagement, they note, is being cognitively and emotionally involved in the use of social media tools. Kang (2014) defined engagement as a "psychologically motivated affective state" (p. 402).

O'Brien and Toms (2009) were more inclusive in defining engagement and claimed it is a multidimensional construct involving cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects. This multidimensional construct demands multidimensional measurement techniques. They developed the User Engagement Scale (O'Brien & Toms, 2009) adapted for this study.

As significant as the role Generation X plays in our society, economy, and expanding digital culture is, they remain largely ignored by the academic and marketing communities alike (Klara, 2016). An extensive search of the literature surrounding social media uses and gratifications (and use in general) returns considerable work in the area that largely focuses on millennials. Because millennials are convenient samples for most university studies and an important age group that will impact world culture for decades to come, most academic research focuses on these younger age groups. By focusing on this age group, researchers and marketers ignore an important segment of our society (Taylor & Gao, 2014).

This study attempts to fill that gap and gain a better understanding of the way Generation X engages with Facebook. The following sections will more carefully examine this relationship through a uses and gratifications perspective, demonstrate the explosive growth and social significance of Facebook, cover Generation X and its importance to millennials, baby boomers, and society and, finally, explore the concept of engagement.

Concepts and Arguments

Generation X is cooler than you:

Generation X has had it rough. “They missed out on all the fun of the 60’s: protests, sex, drugs, rock ‘n roll. All the good jobs are gone – taken by Boomers. X’ers are facing rising costs, a declining standard of living, a polluted planet” (Gozzi, 1995, p. 322).

Generation X, mainly in their 40’s and 50’s now, grew up learning to be independent. Their parents married themselves to their work so these latch-key kids, more likely a product of a broken home than previous generations, grew up fending for themselves (Klara, 2016). However, with the unsupervised time, Generation X, who were born into an analog world, brought on the “dawn of the digital age” (Klara, 2016, p. 2). While millennials are ever attached to a digital tether and baby boomers are slower to adopt new technologies, Generation X built the internet. “We stripped off and dove into the glittering waters of this brand new thing, and made it what it is today” (Barnett, 2017).

Generation X has adapted to being underappreciated. They have been called, “blank, unformed, unknown...whatever” (Gozzi, 1995, p.331). Writers have noted that the “slacker” label was attached to Gen X almost immediately and has stuck (Lesonsky, 2014), despite Generation X proving otherwise (Klara, 2016). Poindexter and Lasorsa (1999) surveyed adults in the Austin Texas area for their views and perceptions of the term Generation X. Respondents indicated Generation X referred to troublemakers or those who were lawless or irresponsible. Neil Howe, seminal demographer, economist,

and historian said, “We called them ‘X’ because we didn’t want to name them anything worse” (Gozzi, 1999, p. 322).

It is important to point out that, labels and representations attached to Generation X, despite being a more racially diverse generation than baby boomers, refer mostly to white Americans. Allen Hughes, director of *Menace II Society* an inner-city, gang-related coming of age story, said, “...the media wasn’t aiming that at us. Our film had the same demographics as ‘Reality Bites’ but they didn’t call it a Generation X film, they called it a damn gangsta film. Call it racist, call it whatever, but we don’t count when it comes to Generation X” (Giles, 1994, p. 66)

Despite this, the reality of Generation X seems somewhat different from the stereotype. Lauren Leader-Chivee, senior vice president of the Center for Work-Life Policy, says, "We've seen that a lot of the characterizations of Gen X when they graduated college were entirely wrong” (as cited in O’Brien, 2016, p. 1). Noting that because there are fewer members of Generation X in the workplace, they are frequently overlooked and misunderstood there as well. However, Generation X is working, on average, ten more hours a week than just three years ago, putting off family and home buying to achieve higher educational degrees and prioritize financial stability (O’Brien, 2016). Generation X has grown into a self-reliant (Scotti, 2014), tech-savvy (Mortimer, 2014) and civically engaged (Crowley, 2003) group with significant influence over other generations.

This influence comes, partly, from a financial connection between Generation X, millennials, and baby boomers. Nearly half of adults in this age range have a parent over 65 years and are either raising a young child or financially supporting an adult

child. Almost 15 percent of Generation X is financially supporting both an aging parent and a grown child (Peralta, 2015).

Generation X is also aging into corporate boardrooms, managerial positions and the halls of elected power. GWI (Mander, 2015) says 70 percent of Generation X is married and 75 percent of Generation X has children. From politics to the workplace, from digital devices, clothing, and programming choices to health care, senior centers, and overseas travel, Generation X is positioned to hold an enormous amount of influence at home and work.

At approximately, 65 million strong, Generation X is the smallest of the three major age groups. There is, however, a lack of consensus about a birth range for this age group that has an impact on estimates of Generation X size. The Census says Generation X was born between 1968 and 1977 (Crowley, 2003). Howe and Strauss (1991) say 1961 to 1981, Poindexter and Larsorsa say 1965 to 1977 and Global Web Index defines the range as 1963 to 1982. As a result of these various age ranges it is hard to get an accurate count of Generation X. Counts vary from 45 million (O'Brien, 2011) to 66 million (Fry, 2015). However, with approximately 77 million baby boomers and 83 million millennials, Generation X is unquestionably the smallest. Their diminutive nature may explain why marketers, and perhaps researchers, mostly ignore them. Paul Taylor of Pew Research says, “numbers matter, size matters and that one thing that Gen X has going against it as the target of marketers” (as cited in Klara, 2015, p. 3).

Generation X may be small, but they are financially mighty. This age group has more spending power than any other generation (Lesonsky, 2016; Peralta, 2015). Generation X holds 29 percent of estimated net worth dollars and 31 percent of total income dollars (Bedgood, 2016; Peralta, 2015). Financially, Generation X divides into two groups, Upscale, and Mass Market. Generation X in the upscale category represent 36 percent of this age group and have a household income over \$250,000 a year. While the Mass Market category entails everybody else, this group still has a higher average income than baby boomers or millennials (Lesonsky, 2016). Fully two-thirds of the upscale group and half of the mass-market group plan to travel in the next 12 months. Half of the upscale group and one-third of the mass-market group plan to buy a luxury item in the next 12 months. Fine wine and craft beer are popular purchases for this age group (Lesonsky, 2014).

Generation X is having an impact on the internet and in the digital space. Mortimer (2014) claims Generation X is just as tech-savvy as millennials. Mander (2015) says that Generation X accounts for 40 percent of adult internet users worldwide and that 80 percent of this age group has, and regularly uses, a smartphone. Generation X spends, on average, more than five hours a day on the internet and seems concerned about privacy. 40 percent of Generation X reports deleting cookies or using a VPN (a Very Private Network) and 25 percent report using ad-blocking tools (Mander 2015). Generation X is also very involved in online commerce, with 68 percent of them saying they made an online purchase in the previous month and 50 percent of Generation X streams music online (Mander, 2015).

Generation X is certainly no stranger to social media. 85 percent of Generation X has a Facebook account that 70 percent of them access via a mobile device (Statista, 2017). However academic studies (Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2010; Valentine 2011) and applied research alike (Mander, 2015) show that Generation X uses social media in relatively passive ways indicating, perhaps, low levels of cognitive engagement. As for other social media behaviors, Generation X is most likely to turn to Facebook to keep in touch with friends and “follow” people online who they are, at least, familiar with offline. Clicking “like” is the most favored Facebook activity while 74 percent can be considered content sharers and 60 percent are commenters (Mander, 2015).

Generation X is a motivated, self-reliant, and technologically savvy generation with decision-making influence over the home and the workplace. Currently, Generation X is being overlooked by marketers and researchers. This gap in our understanding needs to be filled. This a valuable audience segment with its own impact on social communication that offers new insights and understanding of how we communicate in the digital age.

This study examines Gen X engagements, both cognitive and behavioral, with Facebook and what they expect from that use to more effectively communicate with and understand this critical generation. The following section will cover the rise and importance of Facebook as a social networking site.

Facebook: the killer app for Mom and Dad

Facebook is a revolutionary communication and social networking platform that allows multi-modal communication without time or location constraints and has had a significant impact on how we communicate (Gross, 2014). Any Facebook user can interact and connect with other users, media outlets, commercial sites, or even celebrities. They can broadcast their message live or later and, with the near ubiquity of mobile devices, from almost anywhere at any time (Ferrucci & Tandoc, 2015; Smock et al., 2011).

While Facebook has impacted small-scale personal communication, it has affected large scale, worldwide, communications as well. In 2011 Facebook and Twitter were central to organizing protests during the Arab spring. In 2013 Facebook was the “key medium” for organizing large-scale protests in the Ukraine (Elgot, 2015). More recently, a Facebook post from Teresa Shook, a retired lawyer from Hawaii, snowballed into more than 4 million women around the world marching for women’s rights in January 2017 (Stein, 2017).

In 2003 Mark Zuckerberg, intoxicated and angry over a breakup, launched Facemash.com. After hacking into university databases for student id pictures, his site allowed visitors, limited to Harvard classmates at the time, to compare the images, side by side, and rate students based on their attractiveness (Zeevi, 2013). There was considerable outrage as students demanded their photos be removed and school administrators considered disciplinary action (Tsotsis, 2010). Regardless of the scandal, or the short life of the site, Facemash was a success, garnering more than 20,000 photo votes in only a few hours (Kaplan, 2003). It was plain to Zuckerberg that there was

considerable interest among students in seeing friends' pictures on the internet (Zeevi, 2013). After deciding the criticism of Facemash was too strong to re-launch the site (Kaplan, 2003), Zuckerberg began work on a new idea.

Facebook, launched February 4th, 2004 from a college dorm room (Phillips, 2007), has enjoyed explosive growth. Possibly because of the notoriety of his previous attempt at social networking, within 24 hours of publishing The Facebook, a name borrowed from the informal profile directory of students and staff distributed to Harvard freshmen every year, more than 1200 students had signed up. After 30 days, half of the Harvard undergraduate population had an account (Phillips, 2007). In March of 2004, *The Harvard Crimson* reported The Facebook, originally for Harvard students only, expanded into Columbia, Stanford, and Yale and had a total of 7500 users less than a month after the initial launch (Schneider, 2004).

In 2006 Facebook was opened to anybody, over 13 years old, with a valid email account and growth began in earnest (Smith, 2016). By July of 2007, Facebook reported 30 million registered users. In 2010, just three years later, 500 million users were connecting and communicating across Facebook servers. In October of 2012, Facebook reached one billion users (Smith, Segal, & Crowley, 2012). If Facebook took a leisurely stroll to 500 million users, taking six years to reach that milestone, it was a short two-year sprint from there to one billion users or one out of every seven people on the planet (Zuckerberg, 2015).

Currently, there are more than 1.8 billion monthly active Facebook users and more than 1.5 billion daily active users (Statista.com, 2017). Facebook is, by a large margin, the biggest social networking site but only in membership terms as YouTube,

Google, and (as of this writing) H&R Block, have more site traffic than Facebook (Quantcast, 2017).

According to Internet researchers, 1.5 billion daily active users spend approximately 39 minutes on the site at a time (Statista.com, 2017). Users click “Like” on Facebook more than 4 million times every minute and create six new user profiles every second. Facebook will add 500,000 new users every day. Users upload more than 350 million photos a day, with a total of more than 250 billion photos uploaded so far (Zephoria, 2017). Facebook also handles more than 100 million hours of video watch time daily (Smith, 2016). Users will post more than 500 comments and update 293,000 statuses every minute (Zephoria, 2017).

In the U.S. 72 percent of all online adults access Facebook at least once a month and Facebook collects more than four petabytes of data on those users each day. Currently, Facebook data servers hold more than 300 petabytes of data on users. For reference, one petabyte can store 500 billion pages of standard printed text. The digital space necessary to store every written word in the Library of Congress, with 883 miles of shelving and 33 million books, has been estimated at 10 to 15 terabytes (Johnston, 2012). A petabyte equals 1000 terabytes. This vast pile of consumer data is profitable for the social networking giant. Facebook’s 2012 IPO raised \$16 billion making it the third largest in U.S. history (Smith, 2016). Current net income reports from NASDAQ show Facebook’s total net revenue for 2016 was more than \$10.1 billion (Nasdaq, 2017). If, as Potter (2012) says, a media effect is something that happens, partly or entirely, as a result of media influence, then Facebook is clearly having an effect.

Researchers have long attempted to understand the processes of engagement related to Facebook use and have examined the relationships from several different perspectives. Some studies have focused on the personality types, and Facebook use. Ryan and Xenos (2011) found Facebook users tended to be more extroverted and narcissistic but less socially lonely than non-users. Nadkarni and Hoffman (2012), listing the need to belong and self-present as primary motivators for Facebook use, indicated that neuroticism, shyness, self-esteem, and self-worth contributed to a need to self-present and demographics contributed to the need to belong. Peluchette and Karl (2010) studied students intended social image on Facebook and found that related to the need to self-present, students who post sexually appealing, wild, or offensive pictures were, more than likely, trying to impress peers and enjoy social acceptance by conforming to the stereotypical image of a college student.

Studies have also examined motivations behind Facebook use. Sheldon, Abad, and Hinsch (2011) found a dual nature of Facebook and that users can engage with Facebook to connect and disconnect with communities. They wrote use of the site can result in feelings of greater connection to a community while, at the same time, lead to feelings of greater disconnection from a community. They hypothesized this represents two different processes and depends on the motivational factors behind the use. In 2011, Baek, Holton, Harp, and Yaschur (2011) studied novel motivations for sharing links on Facebook and found it can be a complicated process. Users can employ multiple layers of motivations for each Facebook function.

The previous paragraphs have attempted to demonstrate that Facebook is a significant social media platform that is revolutionizing communication across the

planet. Facebook's nearly two billion regular users can communicate across time, distance, and almost any boundary to large or small audiences and Generation X, a significant yet overlooked generation, is engaging on this platform in considerable numbers. The following section will address Generation X, a small but financially mighty generational cohort who wants to save the world (Barnett, 2017; Gordinier, 2009). The following section will attempt to conceptualize engagement and how it connects to the Uses and Gratifications theory of mass communications.

Engagement: Narrowing it down a bit

Engagement is a notoriously tricky concept to operationalize. Researchers, media professionals, and marketers seem to agree that, whatever it is, it is vital. There is a sizeable body of academic literature on the concept, and a significant portion of the nearly \$17 billion social media marketing industry (Statista.com, 2016) wants to be more efficient in engaging online audiences (Stelzner, 2015). According to the Economist Intelligence Unit, companies "in every sector and across a broad range of market capitalizations, share a conviction that cultivating a high level of customer engagement is now a key strategic challenge" (Voyles, 2007, p. 2). Gallup says leading companies and organizations are very aware that engaging customers is a primary driver of business success. They add that those organizations that engage their customers perform better than those that do not (Van Allen, 2009). Forrester Consulting (2008) agrees and says since today's customers are hard won, and harder kept, engaging them is the key to this challenge.

While there is some agreement about the importance of engagement, nailing down a definition is an exercise in full inclusion. Multiple perspectives define engagement in various ways and "context is key when determining and discussing engagement" (Hockenson, 2013, para.3). In the commercial sector social media marketers employ a variety of definitions; usually determined by the measures that social media managers and their consultants choose (Sashi, 2012) but mainly centered on developing relationships with consumers. The Advertising Research Foundation defined engagement from the corporate side by calling it, "Turning on a prospect to a brand idea enhanced by surrounding context" (Creamer, 2006, para. 2). Forrester

Consulting (2008) labels engagement a way to develop deep connections with customers that will drive their purchase decisions.

Researchers have spent considerable effort examining engagement from the user perspective as well. Sashi (2012) modeled a seven stage consumer engagement cycle and called engagement a strong emotional bond with a brand. Gallup (2009) identified different levels of consumer engagement. They agreed that a fully engaged consumer has developed an emotional relationship with a brand. Lim, Hwang, Kim, and Biocca (2015) identified different levels of an engaged customer. They describe emotional engagement as the emotional reaction some audience members have with a mass media event. Emotionally engaged audience members are more likely to interact with others on social media.

Social media engagement, from the user perspective, can be defined from a behavioral point of view or a cognitive/affective one. Both perspectives, this study argues, are valuable to marketers and media managers. Behavioral engagements on social media can lead to greater message reach, and cognitive engagements can result in stronger consumer/brand loyalty and more long-term relationships with the consumer or audience member.

For marketers and media managers, social media engagement is defined, behaviorally, as when the user clicks “Like,” comments on a post, or shares a post (Dolan, et al., 2014; Humphreys, 2016; Lee, Hosanagar, & Nair, 2013). Marketers and advertisers want to increase these engagement behaviors because higher numbers of “Likes,” comments, or shares can lead to greater virality and a greater social reach for firms and marketers (Dolan, Conduit, Fahy, & Goodman, 2014). Further, development

of Facebook's EdgeRank, the algorithm that determines what posts appear in user feeds (Widman, 2012), means current engagement determines future engagement (Lee, Hosanagar, & Nair, 2013).

Social media engagement behaviors have been associated with Uses and Gratifications in previous research thus extending the theory and furthering an understanding of engagement acts on social media. Dolan, et al., (2014) noted a brands' "overt goal is to attract an audience by providing it value, or gratification, through its content" (p. 3). They argue, consistent with fundamental UGT assumptions; social media users are active in their choice to use or engage with social media. As a result, "it is reasonable that we extend the application of UGT to determine the engagement behavior" (p. 13). Paek, Hove, Jung, and Cole (2013) described engagement as the total collection of experiences a user has with a site. They argue that these experiences are "similar to the gratifications at the heart of the Uses and Gratifications approach to media research" (p. 528).

Engagement can be considered from a cognitive or affective perspective as well. Research has shown, cognitive and emotional engagement increases attention to the subject (Boothby, 2011; Chiu, Pong, Mori, & Chow, 2012). Toll, Dreffs, and Lock (2016) wrote that cognitive engagement correlates with deep processing, cognitive strategy use, self-regulation, motivation, and effort. Cognitive engagement is also described as the amount of limited cognitive resources the user allocates to the task at hand (Smillie, Varsavsky, Avery, & Perry, 2016). Brodie, Ilic, Juric and Hollebeek (2013) wrote that cognitive engagement was part of customer engagement; "the level of a customer's physical, cognitive and emotional presence in their relationship with a

service organization” (p. 106). They further noted that engaged consumers exhibit “enhanced consumer loyalty, satisfaction, empowerment, connection, emotional bonding, trust, and commitment” (p. 105).

Calder Malthouse and Schaedel (2009) separated the behaviors or "consequences of engagement" (p. 322) from the actual engagement. They called engagement the user's total experience with a website and noted: "there is more than one path to engagement and that the different paths are realized by offering different experiences" (p. 322). These and other similar studies are part of a growing body of evidence that suggests engagement may be a multidimensional construct. Li, Berens, and de Maertelaere (2013) identified behavioral engagement, relational engagement, and cognitive engagement. Brodie et al. (2013) wrote that engagement could include cognitive, emotional, or behavioral dimensions. O'Brien and Toms (2009) called engagement a multidimensional construct and claimed as "...imperative to construct a multidimensional survey instrument" (p. 52). This study adapted their User Engagement Survey to establish a measurement of users cognitive engagement with Facebook.

Engagement then is a multidimensional construct that can be viewed and defined from a variety of perspectives and connects to the uses and gratifications approach to media research. This study acknowledges the multifaceted nature of the construct and seeks to gain a better understanding of both the behavioral and cognitive engagements of Generation X on Facebook. The following sections will offer a discussion of the uses and gratifications theoretical framework for media research.

Uses and Gratifications: We've been here before

Uses and Gratifications is a theoretical framework that aims to understand the motivations behind media use and the content choices users make to satisfy social and psychological needs (Katz, Gurevitch, & Haas, 1973; Papacharissi, 2009; Ruggiero, 2000). Scholars agree that this framework is appropriate for the examination of new and emergent media (Sundar & Limperos, 2013). In fact, uses and gratification has provided a theoretical framework for the analysis of all media. For example, commercial television (Schramm, Lyle, & Parker, 1961), radio listening (Mendelsohn, 1964), newspaper reading (Elliott & Rosenberg, 1987), and internet use (Stafford & Bonier, 2004; Stafford, Stafford, & Schkade, 2004) have all been examined through this perspective.

There is some variety of opinion as to a particular starting point for uses and gratifications. Ruggiero (2000) cites, as a possible progenitor to the approach, a moral panic that led to the Payne Fund Studies which sought to understand how movie viewing was shaping the hearts and minds of America's youth. Ruggiero also notes Cantril's (1940) work on the social and psychological factors that lead to the panic after the War of the Worlds broadcast as a point of departure from studies of media effects. Papacharissi (2009) points to Lasswell's (1948) famous model of communication; who uses which media, how, and with what effect. Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1973) are more dramatic in their claim that interest in audience uses and gratifications "goes back to the beginning of empirical mass communication research" (p. 509).

Certainly, researchers have been contributing to the understanding of audience motives and selection patterns for more than 75 years. As early as 1935, Cantril and

Allport studied radio audience selection patterns in one of the earliest looks at the psychological motives behind media selection. Waples, Berelson, and Bradshaw (1940) examined motivations for comic book reading among children and discussed three different functions; the Alice in Wonderland, Batman, and Readers Digest functions. In one of the earliest works to specifically examine the gratifications sought from media use, Herta Herzog (1944) studied the "structure of the audience and the gratifications derived from daytime serials" (p. 4) and found three unique motivations for listening; emotional, wishful thinking, and learning.

Multiple authors agree (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973; Rosengren, 1974) Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation and the hierarchy of needs is a good foundation for understanding uses and gratifications. Further, any discussion of early uses and gratifications studies should cover Maslow and his hierarchy of needs. Claiming "man a perpetually wanting animal" (p. 370) Maslow laid out a hierarchy of five needs man is always seeking to satisfy; psychological needs, safety needs, belongingness and love needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization.

It is widely agreed upon that uses and gratifications started, in earnest, as a sub-tradition of media effects studies and grew out of a dissatisfaction with that paradigm (Ruggiero, 2000). In 1960 James Klapper reviewed decades of media effects research and concluded; (a) that mass media have much less power over audiences that previously assumed, (b) what effects there are, are minor, and (c) the process of any media effect is significantly more complicated than any "hypodermic needle" effect (Papacharissi, 2009). Blumler (1979) wrote the uses and gratifications perspective came

to the fore during a time of “widespread disappointment with media effects research” (p. 10).

Out of this disappointment, uses and gratifications grew into an approach that turned the attention from the message sender to the message receiver and conceptualized the audience as an active user rather than “passive victim” (Blumler, 1979, p. 10). Viewing media use through this perspective, the audience becomes one who uses media for its own purposes rather than being manipulated by it. Uses and gratifications attempts to describe, through self-reports, the way individuals use media, as opposed to other sources, to satisfy needs and achieve goals (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974).

Uses and gratifications operates under a set of assumptions that provide some uniformity to research done in this area (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973). First, and this seems in line with the modern internet user, audiences are active and most media use is goal oriented. Rubin (2009) points to variable levels of activity and argues that audiences are at different levels of activity at various times during a media experience. Second, decisions on which medium can be expected to gratify which need and the resulting connection is, largely, up to the user. Next, media compete with other sources of needs gratifications and, finally, an audience self-aware enough to manipulate media for its own use is sufficiently self-aware to report the uses and gratifications behind that use.

With digital media, however, the uses and gratifications assumption of an, at least variably, active user becomes more significant as internet audiences are referred to as internet users, indicating the interactive nature of the medium (Ruggiero, 2000). With

the continued expansion of media choices available to consumers, why they choose the media they do and the gratifications that are met through that use is an important part of the analysis for both the academic and commercial communities (Ruggiero, 2000).

More closely related to this study, however, researchers have examined the uses and gratifications of Facebook use among various age groups and found a variety of motivations. In one of the very earliest studies of Facebook through the uses and gratifications perspective, Raacke and Bonds-Raacke (2008) found relationship maintenance, surveillance, and self-presentation to be primary motivators for Facebook use. Urista, Dong, and Day (2009) took a grounded theory approach to an examination of novel motivations for using Facebook. They found five u&g themes; efficient communications, convenient communications, surveillance, social status, and relationship maintenance. Nadkarni and Hoffman (2012) claim two primary factors motivate Facebook that can work independently or in concert depending on social and psychological factors; the need to belong and self-presentation.

Motivations to use Facebook and its different functions, on deeper inspection, turns out to be a complicated process. Baek, Holton, Harp, and Yaschur (2011) found that users share links for a variety of reason, these reasons work separately or together, and that multiple layers of motivations can be at work within each Facebook function. Smock, Ellison, Lampe, and Wohn (2011) reported similar findings in that different motivations drove users to different Facebook functions and that a variety of motives can be employed together.

Several studies have also used uses and gratifications to examine needs gratified by Facebook. Quan-Hasse and Young (2010) categorized six gratifications of Facebook

use; pass time, affection, fashion, share problems, sociability and social information. Pai and Arnott (2012) claim the primary needs gratified by Facebook are belonging, hedonism, self-esteem, and reciprocity.

Papacharissi and Mendelsohn (2010) identified habitual pass time and relaxing entertainment as needs satisfied by Facebook use but noted that the most salient uses of Facebook for most people "were of a ritualistic and relatively passive nature" (p. 223). Along those lines and closely related to the nature of this study, Valentine (2011) examined the uses and gratifications of Facebook users 35 and older and found interpersonal habitual entertainment, pass time, and self-expression were primary gratifications. Valentine also noted that Facebook activity for this age group is likely to be of a passive nature.

Uses and gratifications is a research perspective that focuses on user motivations of the media choices they make and the social and psychological needs gratified through that use. Uses and gratifications has been employed to study emergent technologies and has identified novel motivations and gratifications for media use. Uses and gratifications has been connected to behavioral engagement in previous work and is the appropriate theoretical framework with which to examine the ways Generation X behaviorally engages with Facebook.

Research Questions

Generation X, a socially and economically important age group shops, banks, seeks news and information, researches products before purchase and more, online. According to Small Business Forum from American Express, Generation X represents 25 percent of American adults and has more spending power than any other generation (Lesonsky, 2014). Generation X, a brand loyal (Gurâu, 2012), technologically savvy (Mander, 2015) generation is assuming control of companies and politics from baby boomers and, as a result, have a significant degree of influence over the workplace and public policy (Wallace, 2015). Almost half of Generation X has a parent 65 or older and is either raising a young child or supporting a grown child. This position allows Generation X a significant decision-making influence over Millennials and baby boomers. In increasing numbers, Generation X is using social media and a majority of those are using Facebook seeking a variety of gratifications.

Researchers and marketers have largely overlooked the relationship between Generation X and their Facebook use, a situation that deserves a remedy. To extend the literature and further the understanding the following research questions were used as guidelines throughout this research:

R1: How does Generation X's Facebook use compare to other age groups regarding actual time spent on the platform?

R2: What are Generation X's primary behavioral engagements, or primary activities, on Facebook?

R3: Is Generation X engaged, in a cognitive sense, with Facebook? When using Facebook, is Generation X focusing attention to the site? Do they consider the site user-

friendly, or cognitively demanding? Does Generation X show any indication of returning to Facebook?

R4: What Generation Xs' gratification expectations from the media outlets they have "Liked" on Facebook?

Method

Self-report is a standard way of understanding the social media engagements and being self-aware enough to self-report is one of the fundamental assumptions of uses and gratifications. To that, this study employed an online survey and focus groups to gain a deeper and richer understanding of the behavioral and cognitive engagements of Generation X on Facebook. Issues with self-reports are well documented but their utility is clear, and they remain a necessary part of social media and behavioral research (Hoskin, 2012). Additionally, their application to this area is also well documented. (Baek et al., 2011; Celebi, 2015; Debatin et al., 2009; Krause, North, & Heritage, 2014; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008).

The survey questionnaire for this study is a multidimensional instrument and includes questions on behavioral engagements, concerning time spent on Facebook, typical activities on Facebook, and general expectations of the site. This survey also attempts to investigate cognitive engagements with Facebook for Generation X through a user engagement survey adapted from O'Brien and Toms (2009).

For a deeper and richer understanding of the activities of this age group on Facebook the survey included open-ended questions designed to reveal users preferred content types, favorite features of Facebook, and expectations of media outlets once the user has "Liked" the page. Additionally, this study employed the use of focus groups. Focus groups are also a useful way of gathering data on consumer reactions and behavior (Brennan, 2013). Various researchers have employed either depth interviews (Pai & Arnott, 2012) or focus groups (Gudelunas, 2012) to gain a better understanding of the uses and gratifications of digital media. These focus group discussions centered

on Facebook, expectations from Facebook and media Facebook pages, and levels of behavioral engagement with the platform.

A radio, television, and outdoor advertising company in a medium-sized Midwestern media market cooperated with this study. Participants were recruited for this study through Facebook posts on their radio stations to encourage followers of these stations' pages to click the link and take the survey. These posts were repeated once weekly over six weeks between December 2016 and January 2017. In the final week of the promotion, followers were incentivized to click the link and take the survey with concert or college basketball tickets.

A closed Facebook group was created for purposes of pre-testing. Pre-tests indicated incorrect wording, typos and some issues with confusing scales. The survey instrument was edited to reflect this input.

Added to this study were open-ended questions about expectations for interactions with media outlets on Facebook, favorite functions, and content most likely to be considered behaviorally engaging. These additions were necessary as a primary focus of this study is to understand the engagements of Generation X on Facebook to communicate with them on this platform more effectively.

The measure of cognitive engagement used in this study was adapted from O'Brien and Toms (2009) who wrote, "Engagement is hypothesized as a multidimensional construct, therefore it is imperative to construct a multidimensional survey instrument (p. 52). Attributes of engagement were adapted from Lalmas, O'Brien, and Yom-Tov (2015) who agreed with O'Brien and Toms (2009) that engagement encompasses cognitive, affective, and behavioral

components. The questions for the cognitive engagement portion of this survey instrument centered on, focused attention, positive affect, aesthetic appeal, endurance, richness, and control dimensions of user engagement.

A series of independent samples T-tests were run to establish the significance of the differences between Generation X and other survey respondents across variables. Evaluation of the adapted user engagement survey was completed in line with O'Brien and Toms (2009).

Through the "numbers in the hat method," survey participants were randomly selected to participate in focus groups. Two focus groups with six members each discussed questions including, "What are your favorite functions of Facebook?," "What would you change about Facebook if you could?," "What is your primary reason for using/joining Facebook?," "What's the best thing about using Facebook?"

Focus group sessions were video recorded for later transcription. During focus group evaluation, themes emerged from transcribed answers. The results of this analysis will be discussed later in the following sections of this study

Results

Sample Descriptives

The total survey sample of 397 respondents was skewed heavily female, white, college educated, and employed full time. There is evidence that shows women tend to use and engage more with social media than men (Chen, 2015; Duggan, 2013) which could explain the lopsided ratio of women and men. Additionally, survey respondents were recruited through an on-air and Facebook campaign through radio stations in a mid-sized Midwestern market. As a result, the sample tends to reflect the target demographics of those stations. Target demographics for those stations were men and women, ages 25-54 which encompasses the age range of interest for this study.

The sample was 83.16% female (n=247) and 16.84% male (n=50). The majority, 65.48% (n=239), of the sample fell within the target age group of 35 to 55 years old and 34.52% (n=126) of the sample was outside the target age range. More specifically, of those respondents who indicated they were not between 35 and 55 years old (n=126) only 7.9% (n=10) were above 55 years old.

Regarding racial breakdown, the majority of the sample was Caucasian (89.38%, n=286), followed by American Indian or Native Alaskan (7.19%, n=23), Asian or Pacific Islander (1.56%, n=5), and Multiracial (1.88%, n=6).

The survey sample reported approximately average educational attainment levels. 30.22% (n=97) of survey respondents indicated they had attained “some college,” while 22.12% (n=71) had attained a four-year degree. 11.84% (n=38) reported completion of a two-year degree and 16.51% (n=53) had a professional degree of some

sort. 15.89% (n=51) had completed high school and .62% (n=2) indicated less than a high school degree. 2.8% (n=9) had earned a doctorate.

Household income was also normally distributed with the majority (22.29%, n=70) of survey respondents indicating household income between \$50,000 and \$74,999. The remaining respondents fell evenly around that category with 16.88% (n=53) and reported a household income of \$35,000 to \$49,999 and 15.29% (n=48) indicating a household income of \$75,000 to \$99,999. The bulk of respondents also indicated full-time employment (69.38%, n=222), followed by part-time or less than part-time employment (14.06%, n=45).

Time on Platform

The first research question asked, "Does Generation X use Facebook as much as other generations?," More than 80% of respondents indicated they spend between 0 and 4 hours a day on Facebook. Slightly more (40.82%, n=149) showed two to four hours than 0 to two hours (40.00%, n=146). There was a significant gap between those two categories and the next, four to six hours (11.23%, n=41) and six or more hours (7.95%, n=29). An independent samples t-test compared Generation X to other age groups. Results indicated there is no significant difference ($t(363)=1.72, p=.086$) between Generation X ($M=1.92, SD=.95$) and other age groups ($M=1.75, SD=.79$) when it came to this question.

Focus group responses reinforced these ideas. Group participants, when asked, "How much time during the day do you spend on Facebook?," indicated spending as little as a half hour to as many as five or six hours a day on the platform.

- "Half hour to an hour maybe."
- "Depends on what I'm doing, when I'm home, probably an hour, just not all at once. In the morning, some in the afternoon."

While the time ranges were broad, half hour to 5 or 6 hours, several responses to this question related to a time span around two hours a day.

- "When I was at work, 40 hours a week, I was spending 15 of those hours on Facebook...probably about one and a half to two hours a day."
- "...I'm gonna say about two and a half hours, but it comes in little spurts."
- "About two hours a day."

Previous studies in this area have indicated that social media serves, among others, a habitual or pastime function (Krause, North, & Heritage, 2014, Valentine, 2011). Focus group answers compiled for this study show that Generation is using Facebook as a habitual pastime as well.

- "...10 minutes here, waiting for a meeting, 10 minutes there, waiting at a stoplight for 3 minutes.
- "...I'll do it before work, I try not to do it at work, I'm not perfect at that. I'll do it at lunch, I'll do it when I drive."
- "...you can be sitting, waiting on your oil to get changed or something and you can just pull it up, scroll through, kill time."
- "It gives you something to do all the time."

References to inappropriate or addictive Facebook behavior also emerged from the focus groups. Participants indicated that they use Facebook at inopportune times - like when driving, and noted how hard it is to stop using Facebook.

- "I find myself completely wasting away too much time and being late to things because I'm Facebooking. It's my vice."
- "I can't sit at a stop light for 30 seconds..."
- "I think I do it reflexively...I'd say it's more of that than anything else. When I stop moving my hands just wanna go look."
- "...I gotta look at it in my car, I gotta pick it up now, I gotta look at it when I'm not doing anything...I just want this now. The moment I start to be more reflexive with trying to seek that information out that has no purpose at all other than to be mindless that becomes something else."

The second question determined time spent on Facebook: "How long have you had a profile on Facebook?" More than 95% of respondents have had a Facebook profile between four and 10 years. The majority (58.08%, n=212) of those indicated they have had a Facebook profile between seven and 10 years, while 38.08% (n=139) reported between four and six years. Again, an independent samples t-test indicated there is no significant difference ($t(363)=1.03, p=.303$) between Generation X ($M=3.56, SD=.575$) and other age groups ($M=3.5, SD=.562$).

To dive deeper into the motivations involved in joining Facebook, focus group participants gave a variety of answers that centered loosely on connections.

- "...connect with folks since I moved away from home pretty early...I was seeing all of these people joining Facebook who I'd gone to high school with. I hadn't been home in 15 years and I was like, this is kinda cool."
- "...at some point I signed up for classmates.com...and I got in contact with a friend and they said, "well, I'm on Facebook, might be easier to chat that way." I didn't want to pay the money to classmates.com, so I joined Facebook."
- "All my students were on it, so I got on it to see what they were talking about."

Primary Activities on Facebook

Posting Content

Several measures were employed to answer the second research question and understand more about Generation X's behavioral engagements on Facebook. The first, "How often do you post content (a picture, video, or text) on your Facebook wall?" showed a significant difference between Generation X and other age groups. Generation X respondents ($M=2.70$, $SD=1.14$) reported posting content to their Facebook wall significantly more often ($t(363)=-2.75$, $p=.006$) than other age groups ($M=3.06$, $SD=1.23$).

Focus group data and answers from open-ended questions support the idea that Generation X are active on Facebook. A large number of answers from the first open-ended question, "What are some of your favorite features of Facebook," indicated Generation X has an active presence on the platform.

- "Posting Family Guy/Maroon 5 video to anyone that mentions anything about Maroon 5."
- "If somebody comments, I'll respond and I might even have a second window open for that."
- "...I've really used it to build my brand...to get people to see what I'm doing and what I'm interested in. My family's in a different state and I get to show 'em pictures of the kids and stuff but it's becoming more and more for political slash business purposes of crafting my brand identity..."

- “...I’m very engaged in it. It’s my blog, it’s my views. I engage back and forth in it.”

Connecting to friends and family.

Survey participants were asked to indicate their primary reasons for using Facebook. Overwhelmingly, Generation X answered, “keep in touch with friends and family” was their main reason for using Facebook ($M=.945$, $SD=.227$). Connecting to family and friends emerged as a prominent theme during analysis of two opened ended questions; “What are some of your favorite features of Facebook?” and “What types of content do you want to see in your Facebook feed?” Answers in this theme centered on seeing posts from friends and family and sharing photos or other information with friends and family.

- “Keeping up with friends and family.”
- “I like to communicate with family.”
- “Connecting with friends and family both close and far away.”
- “I prefer to see updates on family/close friends’ happenings (e.g. trips, children, etc.)
- “...details of my friends and family’s lives.”

Connecting with friends and family was followed by sharing photos, videos, or music ($M=.489$, $SD=.500$), and information seeking ($M=.330$, $SD=.471$) as primary motivations for using the platform. Again, this quantitative data is reinforced by open-ended questions and focus group analysis. Photo/Video Sharing and Information Seeking/Surveillance emerged as prominent themes during analysis of the first open-

ended question, “What are some of your favorite features of Facebook?” The Photo/Video Sharing theme contained responses that centered on posting, sharing, or seeing pictures and videos. Most replies to this question were short, one or two-word answers.

- “Picture sharing.”
- “Sharing photos.”
- “Pictures.”

Information seeking/surveillance

The Information Seeking/Surveillance theme featured prominently in open-ended questions and in focus group sessions. When asked to name some of their favorite features of Facebook, responses in this theme revolved around staying connected to social and community circles, friend and family activities, and news and general information.

- “See where friends are checking in.”
- “Quick weather updates from the source.”
- “That I can keep up with things happening in my area. I like to be able to search.”

When asked, "What types of content do you want to see in your Facebook feed?" survey participants indicated a preference for seeing news and information and entertainment opportunities.

- “Local events I can get involved with.”
- “Favorite sports and related items.”
- “News, local, national and the world.”
- “Community engagements, up to date local info, local content

Information seeking and surveillance is a common gratification of Facebook use and the internet in general (Asghar, 2015; Kim, Sin, & Tsai, 2014; Papacharisi & Rubin, 2000). During analysis of "When you 'Like' a media outlets' Facebook page, what are your expectations of that media outlet?" a prominent theme emerged related to this common gratification. Under the title "Inform," answers to this open-ended

question centered on an expectation of being informed of breaking news, concert and event announcements, and celebrity or sports news.

- “They share links to music news and events.”
- “To keep me informed of breaking and important news, weathers updates, etc.”
- “To keep up with news, sports, and music. Also to keep up with upcoming concerts.”

Connected to information seeking, and reflecting a growing trend to use social media for online searches over traditional search engines (Perez, 2017), a theme centered around information searching on Facebook emerged from focus group sessions and open-ended questions. One user wrote, “I can keep up with things happening in my area. I like to be able to search” as favorite features of Facebook. The focus group sessions offered more depth to this activity and provided insight into search goals.

- “I also like to check into companies or restaurants or places that I may wanna go see. It’s a good place to start cause then you can usually click on their site from there. If there’s something new or interesting I heard about, then I’ll go through Facebook to check it out.”
- “I went to see if were here having a [severe weather] yesterday. Instead of going to [local news channel website], I went to Facebook ‘cause I knew everybody would be talking about it, right?”
- “Its almost taken the place of Google. I’ll google things on Facebook before I go to Google.”

Generation X respondents showed very little interest in playing games on Facebook (M=.837, SD=.277); “I don’t do that Farmville crap,” meeting new people (M=.042, SD=.201); “I’m real cautious about who I let up there,” and making professional or business contacts (M=.150, SD=.358) on Facebook. These results seem in line with previous research that indicates Generation X uses Facebook as a means to stay connected with current social networks rather than creating new ones (Kelly, 2011).

Sharing photos.

Sharing photos and videos also featured prominently in answers to the open-ended question, "What are some of your favorite features of Facebook?" These responses indicated that while other age groups may share photos and videos significantly more than Generation X, it is still a favorite feature of the platform for the target age group. Several answers were simply, "photo sharing," "picture sharing," or "sharing pictures," while others offered greater detail:

- “Sharing photos with family and friends.”
- “Being able to see and share pictures”
- “...being able to tag friends and family in pics so they can see them right away.”

Focus groups also covered photo sharing during sessions. Participants expressed photo sharing as a means of staying connected to distant family and friends.

- “I post a lot of pictures, my family lives in Vermont...”
- “My family’s in a different state and I get to show them pictures of my kids and stuff...”

Facebook conversations

When asked about using Facebook as a forum for political or religious discourse results indicated Generation X disagreed with the statement, "Facebook is a good place to talk about politics," ($M=2.45$, $SD=.982$). However, results also indicated Generation X was significantly less opposed to the idea ($t(362)=2.35$, $p=.019$) than other age groups ($M=2.198$, $SD=.988$). Results from "Facebook is a good place to talk about religion" indicated both Generation X ($M=2.62$, $SD=1.098$) and other age groups ($M=2.53$, $SD=1.092$) disagreed with the statement but not at significantly different levels ($t(362)=.680$, $p=.497$). Comparing results from the two items seems to show these survey respondents do not agree that Facebook is a safe place to talk about religion or politics but are less opposed to discussions of religion than of politics.

During thematic analysis of the open-ended question, "What types of content do you want to see in your Facebook feed?" a theme emerged that expressed disapproval with current content. Answers in this theme reflected a desire to see less tabloid, political, or useless material in the Facebook feed.

- "no politics, religion or immigration."
- "...I'm sick of seeing stories about the Kardashians, Kanye, and so-called News outlets that report on fluff."
- "I get it. You took a picture of some food you ate somewhere. Thanks."

Comments.

Considering the comment function of Facebook, according to these survey results, Generation X comments on Facebook conversations somewhat frequently or sometimes ($M=2.612$, $SD=.973$) and comments on posts in the news feed with approximately the same regularity ($M=2.697$, $SD=.904$). While Generation X reported commenting on Facebook conversations and posts in the news feed more than other age groups, there was no significant difference between them on either commenting on Facebook conversations ($t(357)=-.868$, $p=.386$) or commenting on posts in the news feed ($t(357)=-1.446$, $p=.149$). Qualitative analysis seemed to support the idea that Generation X uses the comment function of Facebook only moderately. Under “What are some of your favorite features of Facebook?” only a few brief answers reflected use of this function.

- “Commenting on other people’s status”
- “Pictures, comments.”
- “Ability to comment”

Comments were also rarely discussed during focus group sessions. However, comments from these sessions can provide deeper insight into uses of the comment function. Answers seem to indicate more focus on reading and responding to comments rather than posting comments.

- “If somebody comments on something I’m doing, I’ll respond and stuff and I might have a second window open for that.”

- “...with Facebook, I get all the perspectives, and what people think about the news. Usually, there’s the article, which I’ll read, but then there’s that persons’ comment about that article.”

However, when survey respondents comment or post on a media outlets' Facebook page, there is some expectation or hope of a response or, at least, acknowledgment of the activity. A somewhat prominent theme emerged during analysis of "When you 'Like' a media outlets' Facebook page, what are your expectations of that media outlet?," that expressed a willingness or desire to strengthen connections with the media outlets they have "Liked" on Facebook. Answers in this theme related to an expectation of contact and communication with the media outlet.

- “To appreciate the time I took to acknowledge their page.”
- “They will be involved with their customers.”
- “Would like a response but don’t expect it.”

Sharing content

According to this survey, Generation X ($M=2.79$, $SD=2.945$) reports sharing music videos on Facebook significantly less ($t(328)=2.039$, $p=.042$) than other age groups ($M=2.365$, $SD=1.047$). As for sharing funny content, important news content, or sports related content Generation X respondents indicated more willingness to share important news related content ($M=2.77$, $SD=1.080$) than funny content ($M=2.91$, $SD=2.94$), or sports content ($M=3.16$, $SD=1.166$). The other age group indicated more willingness to share funny content ($M=2.66$, $SD=1.035$) than news content ($M=2.86$, $SD=1.076$), or sports content ($M=3.258$, $SD=1.110$).

Open-ended questions provided some depth to these quantitative results. Several Generation X survey respondents indicated a preference for seeing valuable, timely, and important news and information in their Facebook feeds.

- “Valuable information.”
- “...news that I don’t see in the mainstream media.”
- “Important news and other things that interest me.”

When asked, "When you ‘Like’ a media outlet's Facebook page, what are your expectations of that media outlet?" several respondents revealed an expectation of important or relevant news and information updates.

- “...they will share accurate, timely news...”
- “Verified truthful information.”
- “To continue to bring things of importance to the community.”

However, during analysis of open-ended questions, funny content seemed to have a broader appeal than quantitative analysis would indicate. Analysis of the open-

ended question, “What types of content do you want to see in your Facebook feed?” revealed a prominent, related theme titled “Funny/Feel Good.” Answers contained in this theme centered on a desire to see light-hearted, funny, or content that encourages or lifts the spirits.

- “More positive things or funny cartoons/jokes. People are so negative anymore.
- “I want to see uplifting and motivating things!”
- “Nothing serious or political.”

“Likes”

In line with recent marketing research (Mander, 2015), Generation X reported a strong preference for the "Like" function on Facebook. Three items in this survey questioned conditions under which a user might click "Like." Generation X indicated the strongest willingness to click "Like" for funny content (M=1.919, SD=.890) followed by important news items (M=2.008, SD=.910) and pop culture posts (M=2.842, SD=1.130). Of the three measures, Generation X is significantly more willing to click "Like" for important news items than other age groups ($t(357)=-2.043$, $p=.042$). There was no significant difference between Generation X and other age groups on clicking "Like" for funny content or important news items.

Friend requests

Survey participants were also asked, “Of the following, from whom would you accept a friend request (please check all that apply).” Generation X reports being most likely to accept a Facebook friend request from close friends (M=.9121, SD=.28369) and most unlikely to accept all friend requests (M=.0251, SD=.1567). Of the five

choices available, only “friends of friends” returned a significant difference between age groups. Generation X ($M=.2762$, $SD=.4480$) is significantly ($t(363)=-2.001$, $p=.046$) less likely than other age groups ($M=.4762$, $SD=1.418$) to accept Facebook friend requests from friends of friends than other age groups.

Keeping social media friends to existing social circles was also a theme during focus group sessions. Participants expressed a preference for accepting friend requests more from among people they know than less familiar acquaintances.

- “I have about 500 friends and I would probably give it 50 people that I don’t know. I don’t like friending people that I don’t know.”
- “I don’t generally send out friend requests, but I do accept them from people I know.”
- “Most of them I know, are old work colleagues, school friends, things of that nature.”

However, focus groups participants also included those with much wider guidelines for accepting friend requests.

- “I play in a band, and I’m a small music promoter, so I have bands from all over the country hit me up, band members that have friended me trying to get a gig or whatever.”
- “I’ve got 1600 Facebook friends, give or take...200 to 300, I probably wouldn’t recognize.”
- “Some of them are my friends, I don’t know how many I have, over 2000 probably. I love it. I’ve got the first person I ever met outside my family...I don’t care about privacy on Facebook. Probably should.”

Privacy concerns/protections.

Finally, to determine the difference in attitudes about personal exposure on Facebook a survey question was included to examine privacy issues on Facebook. Study participants were directed to, "Please indicate the information you share on Facebook (choose all that apply)" and given 10 choices ranging from email address to sexual orientation. Generation X reported being most likely to share "photos of you" (M=.9030, SD=.2966), "real name" (M=.8655, SD=.3418), and "photos of family/kids" (M=.8571, SD=.3506). Significant differences were found between Generation X and others on "sexual orientation" and "photos of family/kids" were found. Generation X (M=.8571, SD=.3506) is significantly more likely ($t(362)=2.102, p=.036$) to share photos of family and kids than others (M=.7698, SD=.4226). Additionally, Generation X (M=.3193, SD=.4672) is significantly less likely ($t(362)=-3.12, p=.002$) than other age groups (M=.4841, SD=.5017) to share their sexual orientation on Facebook.

Focus group discussions revealed concerns about too much personal exposure and privacy risks on Facebook. Answers showed an attempt to maintain some control over personal metadata.

- "This is silly, but I don't let it access my location and my photographs, which I know it can do anyway but it makes me feel better."
- "I don't let it know my location even though I know it already knows..."
- "I don't want my life opened up to people that I don't know."

Additional activity

Open-ended questioning and focus group sessions also revealed other functions of Facebook popular among this age group. Facebook Live, Marketplace, On This Day, and Reactions all emerged as popular features of the platform for Generation X.

Responses to “What are some of your favorite features of Facebook?” included several centered on the new Facebook Reactions. In 2016 (Cheykowski, 2016) Facebook gave users the ability to express more than the simple “Like.” Users, with Facebook Reactions, can now like, love, laugh, be amazed, or even dislike a post. This new feature has met with approval among this survey sample.

- “I like that they have changed it so you can like, love, dislike posts and show sadness and anger.”
- “The different emotions on the like buttons.”
- “The new emotion emojis when responding to posts.”

Facebook’s “On this Day” feature, rolled out in 2015, allows users to look back on old posts, photos, or other memories (Gheller, 2015). A Facebook Memories theme emerged during analysis of “What are some of your favorite features of Facebook?” that included several “On this day” responses and answers related to other memory-related functions of Facebook.

- “...birthday reminders, on this day...”
- “Birthday announcements, On this day.”
- “‘on this day,’ Looking back at my kids growing up.”

Facebook's new Live feature, launched in 2016, has grown into one its more popular features. Currently, Facebook claims 20% of videos shared over its networks is

live and has seen live broadcasting watch time increase significantly in the last year (Constine, 2017). Open-ended questions and focus group discussion reflected this growing trend. Survey participants responded with answers indicating "Facebook Live," "live video," or "going live" was a favorite feature among Generation X. Focus group participants offered more mixed reactions to this Facebook function. Some participants indicated approval and regular use of the function.

- "I also really enjoy using Facebook live."
- "I video bands all the time on there."

Other participants expressed little interest in or knowledge of the Facebook Live function, perhaps indicating this feature has not yet reached all users.

- "Facebook Live? I wouldn't know where to start."
- "I have zero interest in live videos. I think I have watched maybe one ever. And that was an accident."

When pushed for further information on use of this function, "When you go live on Facebook, what are you broadcasting, typically?", respondents expressed a variety of uses for Facebook Live.

- "I'm tearing down a house... buncha people have been asking me what I'm doing so I'm going through the house showing them what I'm doing... I put my kids on there but not too much."
- "If I'm at whatever club with whatever band, I'll put 'em up there... If there's somebody who came through town and I didn't make the show and somebody Facebook Lived it, I'll check it out to see how the show came out."

Less prominent during analysis yet still somewhat surprising given the reviews (Gilliland, 2016; Notopoulos, 2017), was the Facebook Marketplace theme that emerged as a favorite feature of Facebook. Responses within this theme were related to the Facebook function or buying or selling items through Facebook.

- "For sale sites."
- "Marketplace"
- "Items for sale"

Cognitive Engagements

This survey approached understanding both behavioral and cognitive engagements of Generation X on Facebook. To attempt to measure cognitive engagement on Facebook and answer the third research question, this study adapted a user engagement survey first employed by O'Brien and Toms (2009). O'Brien and Toms identified six attributes of cognitive engagement. Focused Attention or the "concentration of mental activity; concentrating on one stimulus only and ignoring all others" (p. 51). Perceived Usability focuses on the emotions, annoyance, frustration, satisfaction, etc., felt by users after the experience. Aesthetics or the perceived visual appeal of the platform. Endurability refers to the respondents' willingness to return to the platform and recommend it to friends. Novelty indicates the Facebook experience was surprising, unexpected, or contained new information. Felt Involvement items referred to the respondents' feeling of being drawn into the Facebook experience and the overall feeling that using Facebook is fun.

Reliability challenges.

Multiple items reflected each of the six factors in the original study. Focused Attention featured nine elements in the survey and returned an alpha value of .928. Perceived Usability was represented by eight elements in the study and returned an alpha value of .884. The Aesthetics factors consisted of five items that returned an alpha value of .89. Endurability was also represented by five articles in the survey and returned an alpha value of .843. Novelty consisted of three survey questions and returned an alpha value of .73. Finally, Felt Involvement also had three items on the survey and returned an alpha value of .723.

Current study reliability

The same six attributes of cognitive engagement served as a guide for questions in this work, with five items left out because of repetition. The Focused Attention attribute was represented, in this survey, by seven items which returned an alpha value of .644. Analysis indicated removing survey items, "The last time I was on Facebook, I was so involved I ignored my immediate surroundings" and "I block out things around me when I'm on Facebook" would increase reliability to .892. This analysis does not include those items. For this study, the focused attention factor was represented by five survey items.

Perceived Usability originally consisted of seven items which returned an alpha value of .500. Analysis indicated removing two items, "I am in control of my Facebook experience" and "I wish I could do more with Facebook," would increase reliability to .773. Once discarded for this study, the perceived usability factor was represented by five items.

Aesthetic Appeal included four items in the survey and returned an alpha value of .123. Removing two items, "Facebook appeals to my visual senses" and "I like the graphic and visual layout of Facebook" did increase reliability but still well below acceptable levels (.560).

Endurability consisted of four items and returned an alpha value of .304. After removing "I will continue to use Facebook" reliability was increased to .545, still below acceptable levels.

Novelty was represented in this survey by the single item, "The variety of content on Facebook keeps me interested."

Finally, four survey items represented Felt Involvement and returned an alpha value of .610. Removing survey items, "My time on Facebook is fun" and "When I'm on Facebook, I don't usually have a goal, I just go with the flow" increased reliability to .696, just below acceptable levels.

A way forward.

Because reliability for four of the six listed attributes was below acceptable levels, a new correlation matrix was constructed to find new factors that best fit the designs of this study. New factors created were: Focused Attention, Usability, and Cognitive Load.

Focused attention was constructed from six scale items and returned a reliability score of .902. Items loading on this factor ranged from .490 to .634. Focused attention centered around the original O'Brien and Toms (2009) study but included a survey question, originally in the Felt Involvement factor. The items comprising the new Focused Attention factor were directed towards users' perceptions of the passage of time while using Facebook, awareness of things outside the Facebook platform, and cognitive immersion in the Facebook interaction.

Survey items from Perceived Usability and Endurability were combined to create a new Cognitive Load factor consisting of four items. Items loading on this factor ranged from .310 to .440 and returned an alpha value of .760. Since the questions in this factor related to cognitive states during Facebook use, demanding, frustrating, confusing, or mentally taxing, the factor was labeled Cognitive Load.

Finally, five items originally in the Felt Involvement, Novelty, Endurability, and Aesthetic Appeal factors were combined to create a new Usability factor. Items loading on this factor ranged from .393 to .563 and returned an alpha value of .825. Articles in this factor referred to the general usability; is the experience fun, worthwhile, satisfying, appealing, or interesting, of Facebook.

Analysis of new factors

Independent samples t-tests were run to analyze the differences between Generation X and other age groups along these new factors. Analysis of the new Focused Attention factor (that consisted primarily of items originally in the focused attention and felt involvement factors) showed a significant difference between Generation X and other age groups. Generation X ($M=3.353$, $SD=.810$) reports significantly lower levels of focused attention ($t(344)=-2.350$, $p=.019$) to Facebook than other age groups ($M=3.567$, $SD=.788$).

However, during focus group discussions an idea emerged that all users did not necessarily welcome higher levels of focused attention.

- “I hate the way it’s intruded into our lives and I hate it that I mindlessly scroll through it.”
- “It pulls you away from things that you’re already interested in.”

The Cognitive Load factor ($r=.760$), with elements originally in the Perceived Usability and Endurability factors, also returned significant results. Generation X ($M=3.846$, $SD=.699$) reports significantly higher levels of cognitive load while using Facebook ($t(343)=-2.181$, $p=.030$) than other age groups ($M=4.017$, $SD=.665$). In other words, Generation X is more likely to report feeling discouraged or confused while using Facebook or that Facebook is more cognitively demanding or mentally taxing than other age groups.

It is important to consider that while Generation X reported significantly higher levels of cognitive load than other age groups, the levels of cognitive load they reported, however, were not very high. They find Facebook more cognitively demanding than

other age groups but not necessarily very demanding. Focus group sessions reflected this idea. Several respondents indicated their Facebook use was “mindless flipping,” “reflexive,” “something to do to kill time.”

Finally, the Usability factor ($=.825$), consisting of items originally from the Felt Involvement, Novelty, Endurability, and Aesthetic Appeal factors, showed a significant difference between Generation X and other age groups. Generation X ($M=2.644$, $SD=.610$) reported a significantly higher level of usability when considering Facebook ($t(343)=-2.215$, $p=.027$) than other age groups ($M=2.801$, $SD=.657$). In other words, Generation X is more likely to find the Facebook experience fun, interesting, satisfying, visually appealing, or worthwhile than other age groups.

Focus group sessions seemed to concur with this result. When asked if they considered Facebook fun, okay, confusing, or frustrating all focus group participants in both groups responded, “Fun.”

Expectations

Survey respondents were asked "When you "Like" a media outlets' Facebook page, what are your expectations of that media outlet?" to address the fourth research question. During focus group dialogues, participants engaged in three primary discursive repertoires. These were labeled according to their content as None/Nothing, Making Connections, and Information Seeking.

None/nothing.

Most prominent was the theme titled, "None/Nothing" that contained 83 responses relating to a complete lack of expectation of media outlets. While multiple answers were simply, "none," "nothing," or "zero," other answers were more detailed.

- "None. I don't usually visit media outlets on Facebook."
- "I have no expectations, therefore there can be no disappointment."
- "No expectations if I only like the page. If I were to make a comment, I would like it to be acknowledged."

Focus group sessions, again, reinforced this notion. When asked about expectations of a media outlet through their Facebook page, respondents indicated low expectations of the relationship.

- "I don't have a lot of expectations. If I like a radio station's page, I expect that I'll see it once or twice a week."
- "I don't generally hit the like button. I'm pretty stingy with those likes."

Information Seeking

Also prominent was the theme surrounding Generation X and their expectations of media outlets to provide information through Facebook. The 78 responses in this

theme showed a preference for traditional, music, sports, and entertainment news.

Further analysis revealed related themes. In addition to expecting to be kept informed and up to date, Generation X indicated an expectation of genuine and unbiased news, entertaining and interesting news, news relevant to the media outlet in question, and news and information consistently updated through the Facebook page.

- “Provide content that is entertaining to me, particularly content that I cannot get elsewhere.”
- “Deliver accurate, factual, news stories which interest me.”
- “I would like to see more informative posts...Sometimes there aren’t any posts for a few days.”
- “I expect that I see information related to that outlet.”

Group participants also expressed an expectation of relevant information.

Multiple respondents indicated a desire to see information related to the media outlet in question.

- “I think we have built in expectations based on what it is we’ve liked. So, if you’re a rock station and you should be doing that stuff and if you’re not, the risk is, by not giving people what they would expect that they would quit liking you and maybe like somebody else.”

Making Connections

Finally, during analysis of this open-ended question, survey respondents indicated an expectation or, at least, interest in making a personal connection with the media outlet. Answers in this theme, 28 in all, included several that expressed a desire to communicate directly with the media outlet but expected not to.

- “I hope they will see it and respond but don’t usually count on that. I understand they are busy.”
- “I would just like a response.”
- “To keep in touch with me or at least respond to me.”

Other responses to this question reflected an interest in seeing a reply of the media outlet if the user comments or posts.

- “To get a response from the outlet when I comment...”
- “To notice my comment.”
- “I would like to see more posts and interactions with fans.”
- “...it’s cool if they respond though.”

Generation X, according to this data are engaging in a variety of functions on Facebook and counting on media outlets to fulfill a range of expectations through the social media platform. They are maintaining connections with friends and family through photo sharing, information seeking, and direct communication. Generation X is using Facebook to stay connected to the wider world and is gathering news and information from Facebook as well as keeping up to date on social and community circles. Generation X is using Facebook to self-present, advertise small businesses, and kill time. While Generation X seems behaviorally engaged on Facebook at variable levels, these data indicate they experience variable levels of cognitive engagement with Facebook as well. Most would consider their Facebook experience "fun" but describe it as "mindless" or "reflexive." Still, Generation X has expectations of their interactions with media outlets on Facebook; to be informed, to be entertained, to connect.

This data represent an opportunity for media professionals and academic researchers to connect to and communicate with Generation X. Traditional mass media outlets are still trying to find solid footing in a new digital marketplace. That this potential audience is spending such significant time on the platform and is willing to connect with media outlets on Facebook is a chance for traditional media to develop relationships with audiences in the digital space. For academic researchers in communications and journalism, this data is perhaps an invitation to step outside the confines of convenience samples and focus efforts on an understudied generational cohort that can influence the social media habits and patterns of generations yet to come (Leung, 2013)

Discussion

The internet and social media have revolutionized means and modes of human communication and caused enormous disruption in traditional mass media. The internet offers media consumers considerably more diversity and choice which, in turn, leads to segmented audiences and smaller market shares. Social media allows users to consume an almost endless variety of content while sending and receiving social input. These and other changes are bringing new and interesting patterns in mediated communications and a realignment of the power balance between traditional mass media outlets and audiences. It has become apparent that the traditional sender-message-receiver model of mass media is an outdated paradigm when audiences are engaged in two-way, multi-modal communication, unrestrained by time or geography. To find a way forward, traditional mass media outlets, radio in the case of this study, are working to develop ways to reach the new and more diverse audiences that social media brings while working to strengthen and maintain relationships with existing audiences who have infinitely more media choices than just a decade ago.

Academically, there is a deficiency in the literature in this area. Research into social media uses and gratifications focuses, primarily, on younger age groups as a consequence of convenience. Millennials are a large demographic with economic and social influence for years to come and are certainly a worthwhile focus. However, that Generation X and their considerable economic force and social influence are communicating, more than other age groups, across the worlds' largest social media platform is also an area worthy of academic exploration. Research on social media and older generations shows, not only considerable similarity in the ways age groups use

social media but nuanced differences as well. This study is an examination of some of those differences and hopes to shine light in this area and offer insight into the cognitive and behavioral engagements of Generation X on Facebook.

The Facts: The Behavioral Engagements

This study argues that, in line with Rubin (2009), Generation X is variably active and engaged on Facebook. At times, study participants responded, Generation X is "very engaged in it" and, at other times, comments described Facebook use as "mindless" or more habitual in nature. Regardless of variable levels, Generation X is busy on Facebook. In fact, results from this study show Generation X reports posting content to Facebook with statistically significant greater frequency than other age groups. This, perhaps, reflects a general trend toward increased activity on social media by older users. There is research supporting the notion that younger social media users are actively engaging in social media behaviors less while older users are engaging more. Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, and Zickuhr (2010) noted that since 2006 blogging among younger users has declined while, at the same time, blogging among older age groups has increased. Younger generations report using Facebook more for the passive act of news and information gathering and less for the active act of sharing content (American Press Inst., 2015). Recent Nielsen (Casey, 2017) work claims Generation X spends more time on various social media networks than millennials. This study demonstrates Generation X spends as much as two hours a day on the Facebook. Concerning Facebook specifically, as older demographics the platform in greater numbers, and younger users migrate to other platforms like Instagram and Snapchat, it is logical to expect to see a decrease in activity among younger demographics.

When they use Facebook, Generation X is strengthening and maintaining existing social ties and consuming news and information; consistent with the existing research into the social media habits of older users (Leist, 2013, Valentine, 2011). However, this study shows some segments of Generation X seem to use Facebook to connect and interact with their media outlets of choice and would welcome direct communication with media personalities and professionals. Since Generation X seems willing to interact with media on the same platform and in the same space as family and friends, this study argues that they are ready to interact on some interpersonal level with media and include media in their current social circles.

Survey results in this study also indicate there is no significant difference in daily Facebook use between age groups. This result is somewhat at odds with a recent Nielsen report claiming Generation X spends more time on social media than other Generations, “almost 7 hours per week” (Casey, 2017, p. 2). With the category minimum of 2 years, according to this study, Generation X spends as much as twice the Nielsen reported 7 hours a week on Facebook. These conflicting reports could be the result of the measurement scales, hours per week vs. hours per day, or sampling. This study sampled from fans of radio station Facebook pages in a Midwestern market while Nielsen gathered data from the long-running, NPOWER National panel.

Results of both studies clearly indicate Generation X is spending considerable time, as much if not more than millennials, on Facebook at various levels of involvement and engagement. If the average person sleeps 8.8 hours a day (Stewart, 2016), then 2 hours represents more than 12% of the remaining day. By comparison, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2015), this age group spends less time

during the day at household activities, caring for others, and eating and drinking than they do on Facebook.

Generation X is on Facebook and has been at it for a while. More than 50% of respondents indicated they had been a Facebook user between seven and 10 years. Between 2007 and 2010, those years when Generation X was establishing profiles, Facebook experienced explosive growth. Active Facebook users jumped from 20 to 400 million (Associated Press, 2012) and revenue increased during that same period more than 90% during the same period (Tobin, 2012).

Focus group discussions further revealed Generation X uses Facebook throughout the day rather than in a single sitting. This usage pattern is consistent with previous studies of younger demographics and their Facebook use that indicate their use is spread over time as well. (Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009; Stewart, 2016).

Comparing Generation X's use of Facebook to other age groups, as stated, there are similarities but the differences and the opportunities are in the details. Millennials show a tendency to use Facebook and social media for information seeking and sharing while older generations focus on the connections to friends and family that social media brings. Previous research in uses and gratifications of Facebook found undergraduate students were motivated by different needs to use different features of Facebook (Smock, Ellison, Lampe, & Wohn, 2011), relaxing entertainment and information sharing chief among motivations. Recent marketing survey work shows that while 41% of millennials still use Facebook every day they are using newer platforms like Snapchat and Instagram primarily for the same reason they used Facebook, for news and information (Friedman, 2016). The American Press Institute (2015) wrote 88% of

millennials get news from Facebook at least once a day and are more likely to use a variety of social media sites for news and information than older age groups. For younger demographics, there is an indication they view social media as a window on the world and as a connection to information about it.

Generation X-aged participants indicated an interest in news and information as well but with some variation. Generation X participants showed a tendency to utilize different Facebook functions, like younger users, but these features were somewhat related to connecting with friends and family. Respondents indicated three interconnected activities on Facebook; to connect with friends and family, share photos, videos, and music, and seek information. Focus group discussions and open-ended questioning offered a deeper look into these functions and motivations. Generation X revealed they share and view photos, partly to stay connected with friends and family, and seek information mainly on those same groups. For these survey participants, Facebook is a means of communicating and keeping in touch with existing social groups.

The Facts: The Cognitive Engagements

This study also sought to learn more about how Generation X uses Facebook by measuring levels of cognitive engagement with the platform. So that traditional mass media outlets, like local radio stations, can develop relationships with potential audiences those audiences need to be involved with efforts to reach them. The literature in this area claims involvement "encompasses both cognitive engagements as well as orientation reaction" (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). Research indicates higher levels of cognitive engagement correlate with increased learning and educational behavior

change (Corno & Mandinach, 1983). Increased levels of cognitive engagement mean higher levels of focused attention and cognitive resources devoted to the task. A cognitively engaged audience is thinking about the message more closely and, as a result, more involved with the platform and the content they consume.

Exploring levels of cognitive engagement among Generation X on Facebook proved problematic. "Is Generation X cognitively involved with Facebook" returned conflicting results between survey responses and focus group discussions. Considerable difficulty was encountered during analysis and factor reliability tests. This study employed an adapted cognitive engagement survey from O'Brien and Toms (2009) work on cognitive engagement with digital shopping experiences. The original 2009 work consisted of 6 factors across 33 measures and showed acceptable levels of reliability. After adopting these measures for the current work, reliability levels fell to well below acceptable levels, and new factors became necessary. Difficulties with reliability were determined to be a result of differences in the experiences measured in the surveys. An online shopping experience is a very particular instance of online behavior requiring attention to risks and rewards. Facebook, however, is a more varied experience with inconsistent levels of attention paid. Further work will be needed to adequately adapt or develop an instrument to measure cognitive engagement among Generation X on Facebook.

The new factors created from measures adapted from O'Brien and Toms (2009) were Focused Attention, Usability, and Cognitive Load. Significant differences were found between Generation X and other age groups across all three factors, indicating

Generation X reports a higher level of focused attention, a higher cognitive load, and a greater sense of usability than other age groups.

It is important to note, that while Generation X's higher scores were statistically significant, they were not indications of strong sentiment on the question. Referencing the intensity scale used for these measures, Generation X reported between sometimes and rarely when asked about their levels of focused attention on Facebook. Focus group sessions and open-ended questioning allowed for a deeper examination of focused attention to Facebook and found conflicting results. Respondents indicated several personal uses of Facebook, small business advertising, personal brand development or music marketing, that presumably involve some level of cognitive engagement. Focus group participants spoke of monitoring severe weather and using the new Facebook "Live" feature to broadcast live events; again, functions and activities on Facebook that require some degree of focused attention. At the same time, focus group participants called their Facebook use "mindless" or "reflexive," and claimed to be "addicted to it" or spending "too much time on it." These results demonstrate that Generation X is, at times, focused and engaged on Facebook and other times, much less so. These results seem to reinforce Rubin's (2009) idea that media audiences fluctuate between levels of activity.

Generation X also reported significantly greater levels of usability of Facebook than other age groups. Generation X respondents indicated they considered their Facebook use fun, interesting, satisfying, appealing or worthwhile somewhat frequently. This data is consistent with focus group discussions where all group participants labeled their Facebook use, "fun." However, there is evidence in the literature arguing that

increased Facebook use leads to lower levels of general happiness. A longitudinal study, recently published, reported that Facebook use negatively correlates with positive well-being to such an extent that any adverse effects of Facebook use are equal to or greater than any positive impacts of Facebook use (Shakya & Christakis, 2017). While subjective well-being and fun are certainly not synonymous, there is evidence of a correlation between the two (Paul, 2015). Further work in this area could provide some insight into the relationship and see if their fun time on the platform correlates with their subjective well-being.

Generation X also reported statistically significant higher levels of cognitive load than other age groups. Generation X, according to this data, shows a greater likelihood of labeling Facebook as mentally taxing, cognitively demanding, discouraging or confusing. Again, like the focused attention factor, Generation X's higher scores did not necessarily reflect a lot of intensity on the subject. Generation X answered between "Sometimes" and "Rarely" when responding to measures in this factor. During open-ended questioning, respondents supported the idea that Generation X does not consider Facebook a substantial cognitive lift. Generation X survey respondents mentioned enjoying the platform's ease of use, saying it was, "easy to post pictures," "easy to share content," and "easy to navigate."

O'Brien and Toms (2009) called cognitive engagement a "multidimensional construct" (p. 52) and argued that individual factors of engagement must be measured together to understand the whole. However, given the adaptability issues encountered during analysis in this study, it was difficult to determine Generation X's level of cognitive engagement with the site. It is apparent though that Generation X shows

significantly higher scores across the new factors established for this project and finds Facebook usable, a relatively light cognitive load, and is affording it, at least some focused attention.

The Facts: The Expectations

Finally, this study sought to understand Generation X's expectations of experience on Facebook through open-ended questioning and focus group sessions. Participants responded to queries about what expectations they had of media outlets after "Liking" their Facebook page. Analysis revealed a variety of expectations mostly centering information seeking and surveillance, in-line with previous uses and gratifications work in this area (Asghar, 2015). A sizeable number of open-ended responses showed they had no expectations of media outlets. An equally sizable number of replies Generation X expects factual, up to date news and information that is relevant to the media outlet in question. Responses to the open-ended questions and focus group sessions strongly indicated users have an expectation of truthful, factual, and relevant information. Users expect to be kept up to date on local entertainment opportunities as well. Considered together with a perceived willingness to interact with media in the same space as closer relations, this study argues that Generation X Facebook users want to be kept abreast of the activities of their favorite media outlets in much the same manner as they expect to be kept up to date with friends and family.

The motivation behind this expectation is available in the literature. Researchers have shown that information seeking is a primary motivation for internet use (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000). Further, users are turning to Facebook more and more for information searches (Young, 2015) and Generation X seems to be no exception. Focus

group members expressed in discussions that Facebook is being used to “...google things...before I go to Google.”

Study Contributions:

Communication in the digital age is almost unrecognizable when compared to just a generation ago. Internet and social media users can communicate with a wide circle of social connections, through a variety of Facebook functions with diverse expectations. Communication and content in the digital age are constant and immediate. This has developed new ideas around mass media and communication including, journalism and the news, social connections, and the nature of interpersonal relationships. The word "friend" has developed more depth and meaning as a result of social media. Academia is just now beginning to direct resources and effort into the study of more diverse audiences. This study hopes to contribute to those efforts and offer a beginning look at the social media habits of Generation X.

The Facts: Contributing to the Industry

Digital communication has radically altered the structure and business of mass media. Advertising budgets and audiences are increasingly shifting from traditional forms of mass media to digital and social media. EMarketer.com (2016) reports digital ad spending, more than \$72 billion in 2016, surpassed TV for the first time. This gap is expected to widen (Emarketer.com, 2016). Traditional mass media outlets have begun transitioning to the digital space to compete and remain relevant to their readers, viewers, or listeners. To compete with the endless choices available to a digitally connected audience, newspapers sell digital subscriptions, radio stations broadcast online or on mobile apps, and television broadcasters are focusing on the small screen

as viewing habits become more diverse. Mass media outlets have also turned to social media to capitalize on the personal relationships possible through the various social platforms.

Through quantitative survey results, open-ended questions and focus groups sessions, this study shows Generation X is a potential source of active and interested audiences and consumers that want to connect with their favorite media outlets. Generation X, with a considerable share of available disposable income and decision-making influence over other generations, is spending a sizeable portion of the day, relaxing, communicating, and connecting on Facebook. The generation that helped build the internet is using Facebook for information seeking and to strengthen and maintain connections with friends, family, and even media professionals.

Further, data shows content specifics Generation X expects from media outlets after "Liking" their page. Respondents expressed a growing irritation with "fake news," tabloid style news, and other information deemed useless or irrelevant. For media outlets to more adequately reach Generation X, content information should be up to date, interesting, consistent with previous posts, and relevant to the media outlet in question. Because levels of cognitive engagement are variable and time on the platform comes in short bursts, content should be, in short, easily digestible packages. Generation X, according to these results, likes sports and news and is willing to share both.

Media outlets should also seek to personalize Facebook posts and connect an individual personality to the content. Respond to posts, engage with audiences, and use Facebook as a platform for social interaction and relationship building. If Generation X is using Facebook for interpersonal social connection, media outlets should utilize the

personal links available through social media and be as personable, and human, as possible.

Generation X and their openness to connecting and engaging is an opportunity for media outlets to engage this audience in two-way dialogue to build relationships that could develop into customer/brand loyalty. As advertising budgets turn more and more to digital, media outlets will then be well positioned in those digital spaces, with those consumers to influence potential purchasing choices. Studies have shown consumers are more receptive to product ideas from members of social networks (Olenski, 2013). We are more open to ideas from friends than from an anonymous, faceless online presence.

In spite of this activity, advertising dollars have targeted millennials and baby boomers and overlooked Generation X. As a result, media outlets have focused their attentions on the same age groups. As media outlets struggle to transition to a new and, as yet uncertain, market reality, this study argues that ignoring Generation X leaves, untapped, a valuable resource. Recent marketing research indicates, "Few marketers seem to be focusing on the demands and needs of this generation" (Klara, 2016, para. 4). Despite impressive statistics like an 82 percent homeownership rate, the highest rate of brand loyalty (Klara, 2016), and more buying power than other age groups (He, 2016), Generation X has "been overlooked and underestimated for a long time" (Klara, 2016, para. 4).

There is some indication this is changing in large scale advertising. Honda uses 80's music and Ferris Bueller to reach Generation X. Hyatt hotels have created a brand of boutique properties targeted at clients in the age group. Generation X is the focused target of health care marketing and driving changes in the way that industry conducts

advertising and affairs (O'Conner-Vos, 2017). As marketers reach more and more to this age group, and media outlets build audiences and relationships among Generation X, this study hopes to offer data that shows this to be a valuable generational cohort.

The Facts: What they mean for theory

As older internet users are spending more and more time on social media, academic researchers are beginning to focus more attention on these audiences as well. As a result, a view of how different age groups use social media is emerging. In 2015, researchers found "clear discrepancies" between younger and older social media users' privacy concerns and behaviors. Older users reported more concerns about privacy protections online but used online privacy protection tools less frequently than younger users (Van den Broeck, Poels, & Walrave, 2015). More recently, researchers examined social media use among older adults and found connections to friends and family was a significant gratification among this cohort. They reported that while social connectedness and Facebook social connectedness were separate constructs, "Facebook is a potential source of social capital for older adults" (Sinclair, & Grieve, 2017). More closely related to this study, Valentine (2011) examined the uses and gratifications of Facebook for users 35 and older and found interpersonal habitual entertainment, passing the time, and self-expression were primary gratifications of Facebook for this broad age group.

Studies also highlight the similarities between older and younger social media users. College students, like older age groups, are motivated by the construction of social capital to use social networking sites (Lineberry, 2012). Other studies demonstrate a more passive use of social media among millennials and younger users in

general. Quan-Haase and Young (2010) found pastime, social information, and sociability were primary gratifications of Facebook use for younger users.

This study takes a multidimensional approach to the uses and gratifications of Facebook use among Generation X and extends the literature in multiple ways. First, this study strengthens the connection between the gratifications and motivations central to the uses and gratifications, and behavioral engagements on Facebook. Next, data from this sample indicate while Generation X uses Facebook in a variety of similar ways to other age groups, they are using the platform to, primarily, maintain existing social circles through posting and consuming content. Finally, this study represents an early attempt to examine levels of cognitive engagement among Generation X on Facebook.

This study has reinforced the idea that behavioral engagements on Facebook, using the various functions and features of Facebook, result from social and psychological influences, maintaining and strengthening social bonds in this case, which motivate these behaviors. Social and psychological motivations are at the very heart of the uses and gratifications perspective (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974; Blumler, 1979; Dolan, Conduit, Fahey, & Goodman, 2015). Repeatedly, throughout open-ended questioning and focus group sessions, Generation X respondents indicated social and psychological factors motivate their Facebook use: connecting to distant friends and family, keeping up to date on news and entertainment opportunities, and habitual pastime. As further work into social media engagement progresses, this study provides support to the idea that behavioral engagement on Facebook connects to the uses and gratifications theoretical perspective.

This work also offers support for the idea that, despite similarities, different age groups are motivated differently to use Facebook. Previous work has demonstrated that millennials are using Facebook as a news source and gratifying a need for information and surveillance. Generation X, according to data offered in these pages is using Facebook in a variety of different ways, posting content and information seeking included. However, focus group sessions provide support to the idea that Generation X is posting content mainly for family and friends to stay connected and searching for information about friends and family.

Additionally, this study attempted to assess levels of cognitive engagement among Generation X on Facebook. The hope was to begin to connect this to the psychological motivations involved in Facebook use. Considerable difficulties were encountered during adaptation of a user engagement survey (O'Brien & Toms, 2009) making any concrete assessment of cognitive engagement problematic. However, after exploratory factor analysis, new factors were created and significant differences were found among the target demographic and other age groups. Generation X focuses more attention than other age groups but reports only moderate levels of focused attention. Generation X considers Facebook more of a cognitive load than other age groups. At the same time, Generation X feels Facebook is more user-friendly than other age groups. Focus Group participants revealed they are variably active on the platform and, at times, consider themselves very engaged with it and other times consider their Facebook use mindless, reflexive, or addictive. Further work will be necessary to examine the relationships between Generation X and their levels of cognitive engagement on Facebook.

Limitations of this study:

The results of this study, like all work in Facebook and social media, is at the mercy of the algorithm. Each social media platform employs complicated computer algorithms which govern the content and determines who sees what content on which platform and when. Results of this, or any study in social media, can be influenced by changes to the rules that govern the kind of experience users enjoy. Publishers have recently been feeling the pinch of an algorithm change on Facebook and have been seeing organic reach numbers fall off sharply as the social media giant pushes publishers to "Boost" posts and increased paid reach (Moses, 2017). Because of a drop in organic reach to force an increase in paid reach, content producers, and media outlets will need to reevaluate content strategies which could impact use and behavior patterns.

Further, the convenience sample for this study was taken from audiences of 35-54 targeted radio stations in one Midwestern market and is therefore limited. Additionally, this study attempted to adapt a user engagement survey from a particular online shopping experience to a more general Facebook experience. Conflating these two concepts created problems with reliability during analysis that will need to be overcome in further studies of this nature. Finally, this study relies on a self-report measure that, like any self-report measure, is susceptible to response bias and inaccurate estimates of use and other behaviors.

Additionally, the popular cultural representations of Generation X are racially imbalanced and any work done on this age group will reflect this. Generation X, and this sample is no different, refers mainly to white Americans which is certainly not representative of this age group in general. African-American culture and performers

are influential and popular in however, most of the music taken as a reflection of Generation X (Nirvana, The Offspring, Beck, Pearl Jam etc.) are white (Ortner, 1998). Rapper and music producer Dr. Dre said, “I haven’t heard anybody in my hood talking about them. The only X I know is Malcolm X” (Giles, 1994, p. 66).

There is even some debate as to whether or not generational framing is a useful way to understand differences and similarities between age groups. Writing for the New Yorker in 1994 Alex Ross called generational framing a “fruitless project blending the principles of sociology and astrology” (Ross, 1994, p. 102). Scholars have noted that, as the structure of the family changes, traditional job roles change, and mass media input becomes more ubiquitous age will become less of a reliable indicator of behavior (Star, 1993).

This sample taken for this study, while taken from audiences of radio stations in a midsize Midwestern market that target this demographic, is a non-representative sample. No sampling frame was drawn and no attempts were made to select participants randomly. An online and on air recruitment campaign targeted this age group and participants were those who responded. As a result, this sample skewed heavily Caucasian female. While this study gathered a large number of survey respondents, a randomly generated sample would create greater external validity and would allow for broader statements about Generation X and their Facebook behaviors.

As mentioned previously, this study encountered reliability issues when adapting O'Brien and Toms' (2009) user engagement survey. While care was made to adapt questions as closely as possible, more consideration should be given to the differences between the concepts involved. O'Brien and Toms developed the survey

around online shopping experiences, a particular behavior with clear motivations and outcomes; a very different concept than the broad nature of the Facebook experience. Users come to Facebook with a variety of motives, use a variety of functions, and seek a variety of gratifications. This discrepancy between the specific and the broad could account for the dramatic differences in reliability scores. Future work, measuring cognitive engagement on social media platforms, will require a greater examination of factors specific to the experience.

This study did not examine specific gratifications of Generation X on Facebook but instead investigated audience expectations of media outlets on Facebook. This substitution was made based on multiple factors. First, this study was conducted in coordination with a Midwestern media company and results from this study will be used to develop social media strategies for Generation X-aged audiences. Also, consideration was made to survey length.

There is considerable criticism of self-report measures centering around researcher or responder bias and inaccurate estimates and this study is no exception. From a uses and gratifications perspective, there is some reasonable concern as to how conscious users are of their motives for Facebook use (Palmgreen, 1984). This study attempted to overcome these concerns by conducting the survey online to allow respondents time to consider questions and diligently preserving participant anonymity.

Applying experimental designs to studying Facebook is certainly not unprecedented. A recent experimental work showed emotional states could be transferred to others through Facebook without their awareness (Kramer, Guillory, & Hancock, 2014). When it was discovered Facebook had been conducting experiments

without informed consent or IRB approval, quite a bit of controversy ensued (Hunter & Evans, 2016). A field experiment was conducted recently to investigate the effect of acquired page likes on offline behavior. Researchers claim a significant effect when the firm pays to boost the post revealing, perhaps, the power of the Facebook algorithm (Mochon, Johnson, Schwartz, & Ariely, 2017). However, as users being self-aware enough to self-report is a cornerstone of the perspective, there are no examples of experimental designs around the uses and gratifications of Facebook. In the future, experiments would be helpful in coordination with self-report data to gain a complete understanding of the multi-dimensional nature of Facebook.

Suggestions for Future Research

In 2011 Valentine, studying the uses and gratifications of Facebook users 35 and older, wrote, "...more analysis of nuance among this broad age demographic should be investigated." This study captures that idea by examining Generation X and their behavioral and cognitive engagements with Facebook. Future research in this area should be conducted on randomly selected sample populations to increase external validity. It would also be helpful to examine gender, ethnic, or personality type differences in Facebook motivations among Generation X. Additionally, as we are all subject to the whims of the algorithm, it would be useful to examine the impact of algorithm changes on user habits. This study also revealed several favorite functions of Facebook for Generation X: Facebook Live, Facebook Marketplace, and others that are relatively new and need further illumination.

Closing reflections

This study represents the culmination of a long journey. As a 25-year radio professional, I have personally experienced the unprecedented change and radical realignment in mass media since the advent of high-speed internet connections and social media. I have watched as audience size, time spent listening, and market shares have declined as listeners took advantage of the myriad choices available and found other sources of music, news, or talk. This shifting and uncertain environment motivated me to pursue a graduate degree and learn more about the intersection of my audience, mainly Generation X, and the social media they use to connect to friends, family, and my radio station. My intention was to save radio from irrelevancy by learning how my audience uses social media and incorporate that information and those social technologies into our programming plan.

More than an insight into the communications habits of an understudied and underappreciated age group or an untapped cash cow for marketers, this study presents solid information on how to reach my target audience and remain a relevant source of information on and a connection to the community. In that community respect, radio benefits from being the original social media. Radio is a very personal medium that facilitates relationships between announcers and listeners. With data that says Generation X is communicating and connecting over social media, and willing to connect with media in the same environment, I will focus on greater engagement in the social space and build on the relationships developed on the air. The information in these pages will show me how to talk to Generation X, increase social and personal interactions, and remain connected to my audience.

Given the lightning speed of paradigm-shifting change in today's digital media, it is entirely possible that there is no such thing as new normal. If uncertainty and a constantly shifting environment are the only sure-things, then information and insight is the best way forward. If there is any hope of recovering dwindling audience shares and even building new ones, we are going to have to connect with them, talk with them, and get to know them on a personal level. Now, with a place to start; we now know how to connect with them, how to communicate with them, and how to build on the interpersonal nature of radio. I can work to move my radio stations more in line with the multiplatform, multimodal nature of my audience and remain a relevant and valuable source of connection and information for today's audiences.

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