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"To Share or Not to Share:" A Study of an Individual's Self-Representation on Instagram in
Accordance with Impression Management Theory

A thesis
presented to
the faculty of the Department of Media and Communication
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts in Professional Communication

by
Breyanna M. Blackwell
May 2017

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Self-Disclosure

ABSTRACT

"To Share or Not to Share:" A Study of an Individual's Self-Representation on Instagram in
Accordance with Impression Management Theory

by

Breyanna Blackwell

This research study examined what the motivations and consequences of self-disclosure on Instagram were as well as its correlation with Impression Management Theory. The research used a 37 question survey which was distributed on social media, through the Department of Media and Communication at ETSU as well as a public speaking class. There were 232 participants in this study who were 18 or older and used Instagram. Research found that individuals' self-disclose using levels of relationship management, showing off, information sharing and habitual behavior. Future research includes the opportunity to incorporate a sample of participants across different cultures to analyze the differences in self-disclosure styles on Instagram.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to Dr. Dan Brown. You were there for me from before my graduate school journey even began. Without you and your continuous care for your students, I'm still not sure I'd know what I am doing. You were there for me through the application process and my dad's never-ending email conversations with you. You were there pushing me through my first semester with strength and support. I appreciate your love and efforts you made for my peers and I, and you will always be a part of my journey and prayers. Thank you, I know you are smiling down on me from Heaven.

God bless you.

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I give all the glory to God, without his guidance I wouldn't be on the journey I am.

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To staff of the Department of Media & Communication: Georgia and Jo; thank you for helping me with everything with patience and kind smiles.

Finally, my complete love and appreciation goes to my parents. Dad, you have always been a rock for me. Even when it seems I would wander astray, you nudged me back on track. Your unending love and faith in me goes beyond anything I could ever give back. You have always guided me in the right direction with love and never-ending faith in me, and I know that if I call you that I will find the answers that I didn't have before. To Mom, you always did what needed to be done to make sure I was focused. We have had our bumps along the way, but I am grateful for your support and that you are proud of me.

I love you both.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Social media has moved into individual's lives full speed ahead. Humans are constantly interacting online, from checking friends posts, to their own posts to tagging others on social media. Whether you are aware of it or not, you are probably online and don't even know it. Over 65% of individuals in the United States have a smartphone (Smith, 2015), and this allows for the opportunity to study how online impressions are formed, managed and created into an online community. Instagram is a newly popular networking site that people use to search for peers and upload photos that they find relevant to themselves or their audiences. This research study examined how individuals use Instagram and what the motivations and consequences are when self-disclosing on this popular social network.

Instagram is a social media site that allows users to upload photos with captions and share them for everyone to see. The site launched in 2010, and within two months had accumulated over 1 million users (Desreumaux, 2014). The social networking site (SNS) is considered the number one photography app and has continued its climb to the top. It was founded by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger and in 2012 they sold Instagram to Facebook for \$1 billion. The site has 150 million users currently and over 16 billion photos shared. While that may be a large number spanned over the last seven years, it is important to note that the site has over 55 million uploaded photos every single day (Desreumaux, 2014). With numbers like these, and so many individuals investing their life moments on this photo site, this allows for research to be conducted to understand why individuals self-disclose online, and specifically on Instagram.

RQ 1: Is Instagram a gateway or hindrance for self-disclosure online?

This study aims to examine what factors come into play when self-disclosure is a factor. The increase in technology allows for researchers to examine how human behavior is shaped in online spaces. It gives way to the opportunities to understand how Instagram self-disclosure can be analyzed and what individuals are saying about themselves or others when they post a certain photograph on their Instagram feed.

RQ 2: To what degree can social networking sites influence user representation (the motivations and consequences)?

This research also examined what concepts can be coded for when we disclose online. This study measured for levels of relationship management, information sharing, showing off, information storage, entertainment, self presentation on Instagram, keeping up with trends, habitual behavior, and psychological well-being.

Instagram is a rising social networking site that allows people to search for individuals and we find that these put on certain faces depending on who their audience is.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Networking Sites

Social networking sites (SNS) have begun to weave their way into most individuals everyday life, so understanding their impact is crucial. When an individual uses SNS to search for other individuals, they do so to reduce uncertainty. There can be many reasons for what material is posted by the user as well. Instagram has made it easier to post and see pictures, direct messages and daily activities of individuals. Instagram doesn't affect one age group of people, it is continuously expanding and with the rise in interest, research has been implemented to explore why individuals self-disclose and the reduction of uncertainty in various SNSs.

Facebook

Facebook is one of the most researched SNS in the United States. Facebook got its start in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg of Harvard University. It started as a website to find other Harvard peers over 11 years ago and how now begun its empire as the largest social media network in the world (Carlson, 2010). According to Carlson (2010), the site has over 450 million users who are active and brings in over \$12 billion a year, shortly behind Google at \$17 billion.

Facebook has been growing exponentially, almost 800% in the past 8 or 9 years (Olenski, 2013). These numbers paired with knowing that a person can access information about others and create the ideal image of themselves online has led to abundances of information on this SNS and self-disclosure as well as uncertainty reduction.

The studies included below show the research that has been completed on Facebook and self-disclosure, uncertainty reduction, and motivations for using a SNS.

Applied Theories

With regards to Facebook, Impression Management Theory has been a tool used in multiple research studies. In one such study and book, the *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), Erving Goffman analyzes the theory of how individuals choose different vantage points for the multiple platforms they align themselves with. Goffman is the creator of Impression Management Theory and much research followed his work. He proposed that when an individual places himself among others, there is a tendency to act differently than when alone (Goffman, 1959). Generally, humans are concerned with how we are perceived and with that, how our status is viewed. This is found as a result of expressing ourselves. Goffman (1959) notes that there are two different ways that one's expressiveness is shared, the expression given and the expression that a person "gives off." The expression that he gives off is created by a particular type of character for the specific reaction he wants from his audience (Goffman, 1959). Within that communication are verbal signs that an individual gives. This is the interaction that he knows will form an attachment with the receiver of the message. Furthermore, Goffman explains that humans have the tendency to alter their public selves to avoid embarrassment or from being ostracized. He also found that there are no exact number of times that this can happen, and individuals will typically take whatever corrective measures needed to create the identity they wish to portray for a given audience.

The studies would continue thirty one years into the future. Leary and Kowalski (1990) found that the theory can be compartmentalized into a model, consisting of two parts, the impression motivation and the impression construction. This first part of the study revealed that impression motivation depends on the relevance of the goal, the desired outcomes and whether there was a similarity between the "real" image and the altered image (Leary & Kowalski,

1990). The second part identified impression construction as when the user identifies the image they want to create with its target values and then whether there are required constraints that need acknowledgement while creating that image for their audience.

Using a sample of college students, research by Johnston et al. (2013) examined how the usage of Facebook, perception, and the attitudes toward Facebook and Twitter was created. Their sample included 496 individual girls obtaining a survey about their experience with the social media site. The research included the facts that 34% added Twitter, 72% used Facebook to look at information and of this group 95% had a Facebook. The authors further claimed that the information they chose to display on their profile was influenced by how they felt the audience perceived them. The population of people using the site on their phones was not included in this data.

The various categories pertaining to self-disclosure on Facebook will be looked at further, using the research studies and results below.

Presentation of Self on SNS: Facebook

Given that there is an option to make an individual's profile either public or private allows a person to choose how they wish their identity shared (Wilson et al., 2012). Upon becoming a member of the Facebook community, an individual is given a blank canvas to create the image they want others to perceive. This includes a created image of self.

In a study by Walther et al. (2008), an individual's presentation on Facebook was examined. Participants were given a mock Facebook profile and were led to believe it was real. Each had viewings of material that was shown at various levels of attractiveness or unattractiveness. The study found that when participants considered the content on the Facebook page to be appealing or attractive, they assumed the owner was attractive, as well. Furthermore, when there was positive feedback from the owners "friends," they were also

considered to be more attractive, regardless of gender. This study could be expounded up with future research to show how certain posts of the individual contributed positively or negatively to oneself.

Several aspects of relationships and how it pertained to the presentation used and information seeking was examined by Tong (2013). This included the initial formation a relationship, as well as the break up, and correlates it with the amount of uncertainty that the individual feels about terminating the relationship. Further, research showed that social technology is crucial to the entire relationship from the beginning of the relationship to the breakup stage (Blackwell, 2015). This study revealed that individuals who are in the breakup stage of relationship experience high levels of embarrassment when friends online disappeared or disagree with their actions about the dynamics of the relationship. Lastly, there was disapproval from friends online when the relationship information was made public.

Initial Interactions

The act of meeting a stranger or acquaintance can create a variety of responses from both parties and these initial interactions have been researched in different ways. When you take uncertainty reduction theory (URT) into account, many factors can reduce the uncertainty in an initial face to face interaction and in most cases there is a motivator such as information seeking. The approach individuals choose depends on their selected role in an interaction, by choice or a restraint (Ramirez, 2009).

In initial interactions, Rubin (1977) found that having a conversation or interaction with a substance is a large factor for reducing uncertainty. This study's participants were either asked ambiguous questions or specific context questions during their meeting with a peer. The results demonstrated lower uncertainty with substantial conversations. A similar occurrence was found

in the study by Yoo (2009) when a group of students were set up on blind dates and given stimuli material. Research showed that individuals given positive material had lower levels of uncertainty. These studies contributed and were of benefit to this research project because they demonstrate how substance creates a connection between individuals and can be extrapolated into whether Facebook browsing satisfies lowering uncertainty. They have been included as a basis for showing how Facebook is relevant when people need a space to relieve uncertainty about an individual.

While there is research that allows an understanding of how Facebook browsing is applied to URT, it is important to find connections on a deeper level. An understanding as to what causes levels of uncertainty to rise and knowing the types of responses that can be used to lower uncertainty between individuals would be informative. Research has shown that interactivity, or involvement and the concept of mutuality, can create less uncertainty after an initial interaction (Ramirez, 2009). In this study, the 240 total participants were split into half confederates and half naïve subjects. Each participant was assigned a same-sex partner or told to observe an interaction. They were then given five questions to discuss and motivate uncertainty reduction and information seeking. The results concluded that participants with higher levels of involvement had less post-interaction activity. The author further explains that there are levels of information seeking involved from active participant to passive observer. Furthermore, the results yield that the level of involvement on the computer created diverse levels of interactivity and judgement.

Further contributions can be made studying uncertainty reduction of initial interactions over time. In a study by Westerman and Tamborini (2008), the participants were put into male-female set ups interacting for fifteen minutes in two different ways; instant messenger or in

person. They were instructed to record their uncertainty about their partner for each minute of the interaction. Even though the results showed that there was more uncertainty in the instant messaging section than face to face, both groups followed similar patterns over time. These research articles will shape this thesis and help correlate my subjects' data by levels of involvement on Facebook. It will discriminate whether conducting face-to-face interviews or surveys might be the better approach when conducting research or possibly a mixed-methods approach could be warranted.

Certainly, taking a deeper look at other variables such as culture could provide valuable information. Research by Neuliep (2012) shows that similarities between individuals, such as belonging to a similar culture can contribute to a decrease uncertainty. This author tested the correlation between intercultural communication and ethnocentrism. Individuals were paired with a person of another culture followed by a pairing of their own culture. This study's findings were confirmed in results found by Gudykunst (1985) which found that correlation between self-monitoring and shared networks was low for acquaintances or "dissimilar friend conditions."

Cultural similarity also reduced uncertainty as well as attraction and shared communication networks. Both of these studies are beneficial because factors like similarities and involvement could contribute to types of Facebook browsing and where uncertainty can be reduced by it. This thesis will elaborate on lowering uncertainty levels through similarity and these articles help support it. Additionally, they are helpful in analyzing data once the study has been put into effect.

Self-Disclosure on Facebook and Other Social Networking Sites (SNS)

Self-disclosure online is a recurring concept that allows us to examine why and in what ways the Facebook community chooses to represent themselves. Self-disclosure is defined as

“sharing information with others that they would not normally know or discover. Self-disclosure involves risk and vulnerability on the part of the person sharing the information,” according to Pearson (2010, para 2).

Self-disclosure on Facebook can be researched in several ways. A study by Waters and Ackerman (2011) showed how disclosure is perceived and the consequences when an individual chooses to share particular content. In their methods, a survey was distributed among students in a public speaking course and the results showed that participants found Facebook a positive experience and that sharing information created stronger virtual relationships with family and friends. But they also correlated that the more Facebook was used, the more likely negative habits can form (Waters & Ackerman, 2011). Further, they discovered that members of the Facebook community tend to self-disclose to distant friends rather than close friends. This was not found in earlier research.

The continuation of research by Chen and Sharma (2013) examined how self-representation is crucial to the function of social media sites and the formation of relationships in terms of identification. The evidence concluded that two conditions must be present due to the lack of social cues online. The first is that conditions trust is crucial to creating increase in self disclosure. The second is that an individual often believes that when they have to score more information about themselves, it leads to the receiver sharing and return. Chen (2013) stated that reciprocity creates an increase in disclosure and that individuals tend to share particular types of content based on their community. Additionally, when the individual feels positively about his or her community, she or he has an increase in identification.

Instagram in Previous Research

Instagram has created the availability of an online world to be created for the user. Whether or not it is realistic, the individuals can be who they are or even who they wish they

were. Instagram has given individuals a way to shape how they self-disclose online. Since Instagram is becoming one of the most used and widely known SNS for photographs alone, this can also cause users to feel skeptical when they don't know a person yet or if the person doesn't have an Instagram account.

The SNS has been on the rise and gives researchers the opportunity to explore content of their own or others and molds the way online identities are shaped. It has constantly given users the ability to decide who they want to be online and have the ability to change the privacy settings as well. Blackwell stated in a paper in 2015, "a person can be friends with an individual and see information about them that was posted from another's profile that they aren't even connected with. Easy access creates an overabundance of information."

Self-disclosure on Instagram

Instagram is a more recent form of social media that has been increasing with popularity. With an increase in usage, research will continue to be made in that field and how users self-disclosure on SNS such as Facebook and Instagram, as well as the differences in how males and females choose to self-disclose. The studies listed below demonstrate the areas in which Instagram has been examined, in other aspects of the social network site.

Instagram in the Workplace

Research in a study by McNely (2012) stated that Instagram can be used to show power through imagery for an organization. In his study, McNely used qualitative research skills to examine three separate organizations; a news organization, a retail organization as well as a non-profit. The research has to be used to how each organization's social software strategy can be

used to shape the public's perception. The methodology was of 15 organizations Instagram posts that were followed over a two week period. Results found that in almost half of the posts the organization tried to “humanize” themselves for their followers. They also found that the orientation of the photo played a crucial part in how the public viewed an image. Future research of the study would include looking at the images as a whole, rather than individual image coding.

In a study by Salomon (2013), they examined whether the library should involve themselves with Instagram and what the benefits would be of that social network versus a different one. They took a look at the four different social media accounts that the library had and found that the Instagram followers tended to be the most attentive.

In a study by Weilenmann et al. (2013), they examined how the increased use of smartphones is contributing to an increased technological use of documenting their museum experiences. They examined the process through the use of Instagram and users photo sharing while visiting historical museums. Their study included a content analysis of 222 Instagram museum accounts, interviews with 14 of the visitors who created some of them. The results showed that visitors recreate their experiences and construct their own narratives as well. They found that online social media dialog varies greatly from museum site content. They found that the use of Instagram far reaches past the platform itself, but has branched into creating content the way the user wants. Photo manipulation and edits are changing the shape of museum observance as well as online content as a whole.

Instagram Use and Hashtags

In another study by Ferrera (2014), they examined how human behavior can be studied on Instagram. The study was used to understand how media sharing can increase a user's online popularity based on the follower-followee platform that the social networking site uses. The

analyzed community structure as well as the behavior of using hashtags for their content. They studied their content analyzes of media, relationships and users as evidence for keywords or “hashtags”. Results showed that topical interests within online communities shape the organization itself. They also found that users limited vocabularies influenced their limited attention span and created trends within the online group. Future research in the study decided that assessing the network’s structure to determine content’s popularity online would be beneficial.

In other research of Instagram, Gibbs et al. (2015) found that the use of #funeral plays a large part in what people post on Instagram. The research found that most of the individuals who posted images with #funeral were trying to communicate their emotions to wider networks of individuals they were familiar with. They claim that through the use of Instagram, individuals are moving toward more personalized sharing experiences of funeral processions and away from more traditional ones.

Instagram research has also explained into how brand crises are formed and managed with the use of hashtags. In a study by Guidry et al. (2015) at Virginia Commonwealth University, she used a content analysis of 700 posts by users over two weeks. She examined the content for tone and origins. The research showed that consumers and employees posted negatively and reflected their feelings of customer service or the work environment. They also found that Instagram has low levels of engagement and the brands did not reach out to resolve these issues over Instagram. These findings result in the importance of public relations to intervene and resolve their brand identity crisis.

Cultural Impacts and Instagram

Research by Silva (2013) examined how our sensory systems can be a part of city dynamics in accordance with Instagram. They found that Instagram holds over 2.3 million shared

photos and that there are opportunities to characterize users behavior. In the study they examined how photo sharing is a factor in cultural behaviors and they used Instagram to gather information about specific regions of interest with various city dynamics.

Hochman (2013) conducted research of Instagram has a way of studying social and cultural patterns. In this research they analyzed Instagram's interface and compared 13 global cities and over 3 million photos from these cities, in particular Israel to examine social and political insight.

In a similar study by Alper (2013), they examined photojournalism on an app that is similar to Instagram in Afghanistan called Hipstamatic. They analyzed the issues with users creating the war in Afghanistan as stylishly vintage and the differences between using photos as illustrations versus purely as photography. The used this study to examine the danger of non-soldiers mimicking the photo-media practices of U.S. soldiers and its complexity.

Self Representation on Instagram

Photos online where the focus of research performed by Bakhshi (2014). In their study they observed how photos play a large part of how we interact online and they focused on physical faces on Instagram photos. They studied how certain faces create social engagement online and they reached this through the factors of comments and likes. The study found that photos without faces will receive 62% less likes and 68% less comments regardless of their social reach online. The also found that females are the majority of Facebook and Twitter users, where the majority of users on LinkedIn and Google+ are males. Future research would allow for researchers to further the field of visual analysis.

Research about Instagram has also been incorporated in professional sports. Goffman's Impression Management Theory was used in a study by Smith and Sanderson (2015) to understand how athletes use social media as a way of self-representation. The study consisted of 27 professional athletes Instagram feeds where they used mixed methods to study the photos as well as the captions for emerging themes. The main content they examined was the differences between males and females and found that previous self-representation of athletes aligned with how they interact on Instagram. Future research of the study consisted of selecting a larger sample pool and looking outside of the recentcy of the posts.

Photo filters are a major part of Instagram's features. In a study by Ferwerda et al. (2015) examined the effects of what applying photo filters means to the users audience. Personality traits are becoming easy to study when most individuals share large portions of themselves online. In their study, 113 participants completed a survey about their personality as well as the collection of 22,398 Instagram photos. The research found that the way the user decides to edit the photo plays a part in reflecting their personality traits. Individuals with high levels of extraversion uploaded photos with less red and orange, while individuals with high levels of conscientiousness uploaded photos edited with different amounts of saturation. Cultural differences serve as an area for future research.

These are all ways in which Instagram has been used to examine its impact within various fields. This study is using the new social media to create a better understanding of Instagram motivation and consequences, as the popularity of SNS increases rapidly.

Female vs. Male Interaction Online

Another concept applicable to this study is understanding the differences between how male and female interactions occur online. There is research to show how online user images can

shape individual's professional images. Research finds that there is a difference between how males and females are viewed by their employer. Karl and Peluchette (2008) examined the consequences of how a particular post on Facebook can shape the way the job hunt will favor them. The results showed that male applicants were held less accountable than females in the same situation. Research found that females suffered by comparison to men in terms of how their perception was shaped with potential employers.

Research by Waters and Ackerman (2011) discovered that females were more active on Facebook than men. Gender is a significant factor to examining Facebook habits between men and females alongside the differences. In previous studies they had found that both genders are more likely to add a fellow Facebook user when that individual appeared more attractive in their online photo whether or not that is true (Wang et al, 2010). In research by Wang et al. (2010), they found that there are factors that can improve the possibility of individual friendship building with other online users. One significant aspect is that males and females interact differently online, males are more likely to friend individuals of the opposite sex than the same sex.

It is important to understand that individuals all act differently on social media, but there are factors that are different between genders. Research can further explain what motivations and consequences individuals have while using Instagram.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

To examine the differences between why individuals self-disclose on Instagram we used an online questionnaire through Qualtrics to analyze analytics and results. Participants were asked questions related to demographics as well.

Method and Procedure

Quantitative survey. The sample for this study were individuals who were motivated or involved in Instagram. These were individuals who were active or familiar with Instagram and the study was also approved through the university's Institutional Review Board for the research conducted. The survey was distributed to East Tennessee State University's Department of Media and Communication through student email. It was also distributed to students in SPCH 1300 class. Social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram as a tool. The link was anonymous and did not save any form of the participant's information; their identity was entirely private. Participants were also allowed to stop the survey at any time and it was completely voluntary.

Sample. The study sample included 232 participants. For the individuals to be part of the study they had to use Instagram. The questionnaire was completed by 174 females and 58 males.

Unit of Data Collection/Analysis

The survey was created using a survey from Waters and Ackerman 2011, previously created by Lee et al. 2008. There are seven sections; Self-Presentation, Following Trends, Information Sharing, Relationship Management, Storage of Information, Showing Off and Entertainment. This was the quantitative research tool used to analyze the results of the study. Waters and Ackerman's study from 2011 provided the questions which were measured on a 7-point Likert scale. The scale ranged from 1 to 7, with 1=strongly disagree to 7= strongly agree

based on how strongly they responded to the question. The survey consisted of 37 questions and examples of these are; (1) I disclose to resent my ideal self on Instagram, (2) I disclose to share my experiences, (3) I disclose to save memorable information, (4) I disclose to maintain a close relationship with others, and (5) I feel uneasiness when I am not disclosing on Instagram.

The concepts under consideration are presentation of self, managing relationships and information sharing. Individuals were given an informed consent letter prior to accessing the questionnaire and had to be 18 or older to take part.

In order to analyze the results a multivariate analysis of variance, or MANOVA, MANOVA was used to understand the connection between self disclosure differences between males and females and their motivation for self-disclosure. SPSS was used to measure the responses and give the quantitative result of what the participants answered. The independent variable is male and female and the dependent is the motivations and consequences of the participant's self-disclosure on Instagram. This study focused on the relationship between levels of self-disclosure motivations and the differences between males and females on Instagram. Therefore, MANOVA was needed to gather the result data. All data from this study complies with the rules of East Tennessee State University's IRB. All statistical data below was gathered using SPSS.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This study was used to analyze the differences of males and females' motivations and consequences when self-disclosing on Instagram in accordance with the questionnaire of 37 questions. This section discusses results from the study and what significant data was found and the overall findings of the study.

In Table 3-4, the sample of participants of the study included 174 females and 58 males from the United States. They were asked to complete the survey about why they self-disclose on Instagram and any motivations or consequences of the disclosure on Instagram. The questionnaire delivered 232 responses, 78 (25.19%) were male and 174 (74.81%) were female. Of the participants in this study, 67% of them were 18 to 24 years of age, 16% of them were 25 to 34, 8% of them were 35 to 44 and 3% of the participants were 45 to 54 years old.

In this study, 48% of the participants reported that they agree or strongly agreed that they disclosed on Instagram to save personal thoughts online and 46% of them claimed that they disclose to keep a personal record. 48% of the participants disclose to maintain a relationship with others and 21% of participants disclose to alleviate stress. Of the participants 12% of them self-disclose on Instagram to feel psychological stability and 29% of them achieve psychological freedom after disclosing online. For this study, significant data resulted to answer the following research question:

RQ 1: Is Instagram a gateway or hindrance for self-disclosure online?

Results of this study showed that there was a connection between males and females in the questionnaire responses. In response to this research question one variable was significant and this was (1) Trust deepens between me and someone I am close to after disclosing, Wilks's

Lambda= .70, $F(31, 200) = 1.69, p < .05$. (2) I disclose to share information about current issues, Wilks's Lambda= .70, $F(31, 200) = 1.69, p < .05$. Table 1 lists the means and standard deviations for significant results of motivations for Instagram disclosure.

Table 1
Group Means and Standard Deviations for Motivations of Self-Disclosure on Instagram

Male v Female Results	Mean	SD
<i>Relationship Management</i>		1.72
Table 1.		1.66
Trust deepens between me and someone		
I am close with after disclosing		
<i>Male</i>	4.26*	
<i>Female</i>	3.72	
<i>Information Sharing</i>		
I disclose to share information about		
current issues		
<i>Male</i>	4.84*	1.55
<i>Female</i>	4.18	1.73

RQ 2: How influenceable are social network sites on user representation (motivations and consequences of Instagram)?

Significant findings of this study include that popularity online plays a large factor, according to table according to Table 2. In this study, research shows that 26% of the participants disclosed to show their popularity, and the variable examined was the connection between male and female differences. In response to the second research question, two significant variables resulted (1) I feel I cannot control my disclosing behavior, Wilks's Lambda= .70, $F(31, 200) = 1.69, p < .05$. (2) I disclose to show that I am popular, Wilks's Lambda= .70, $F(31, 200) = 1.69, p < .05$.

Research shows that the male samples were more inclined to self-disclose to maintain a level of popularity. The findings also found that 4% of the participants felt they cannot control; their disclosing behavior, though males responded more strongly to habitual behavior and showing off.

Table 2

Group Means and Standard Deviations for Influences of Self-Disclosure on Instagram

Male v Female Results	Mean	SD
<i>Habitual Behavior</i>		
I feel I cannot control my disclosing behavior		1.72
		1.19
<i>Male</i>	2.59*	
<i>Female</i>	1.91	
<i>Showing Off</i>		
I disclose to show that I am popular		1.72
	3.43*	1.61
<i>Male</i>	2.81	
<i>Female</i>		

Table 3.

Motivations for Self-Disclosure on Instagram

	Mean	SD
<i>Information Storage</i>		
I disclose to save personal thoughts and pictures on Instagram.	4.99	1.54
<i>Male</i>		
<i>Female</i>	4.93	1.50
	5.01	1.56
I disclose to save memorable information.		
<i>Male</i>	5.61	1.26
<i>Female</i>	5.52	1.16
	5.64	1.30
I disclose to keep a personal record.		
<i>Male</i>	4.84	1.50
<i>Female</i>	4.84	1.58
	5.06	1.48

Relationship Management		
Disclosures on Instagram serve as a meeting place for me and others.	4.33	1.72
<i>Male</i>		
<i>Female</i>	4.69	1.55
	4.21	1.76
I disclose to communicate with friends and family.		
<i>Male</i>	5.80	1.26
<i>Female</i>		
	5.76	1.17
I disclose to maintain a close relationship with others.	5.81	1.29
<i>Male</i>		
<i>Female</i>	5.17	1.51
I disclose to let people know my current affairs.	5.26	1.49
<i>Male</i>	5.14	1.52
<i>Female</i>		
	4.65	1.63
	4.66	1.55
	4.64	1.66
Entertainment		
I disclose because I enjoy it.	5.32	1.34
<i>Male</i>	5.03	1.41
<i>Female</i>	5.41	1.31
I disclose as a source of an entertainment.	5.23	1.45
<i>Male</i>	4.95	1.50
<i>Female</i>	5.33	1.42
I disclose because it is fun.	5.31	1.37
<i>Male</i>	5.03	1.43
<i>Female</i>	5.41	1.34
Showing Off		
I disclose to show off my ability.	4.20	1.77
<i>Male</i>	4.50	1.76
<i>Female</i>	4.10	1.76
I disclose to show off by publicizing my activities.	4.30	1.73
<i>Male</i>		
<i>Female</i>	4.59	1.70
	4.20	1.73
I disclose to show that I am popular.		
<i>Male</i>	2.97	1.65
<i>Female</i>	3.43*	1.72
	2.81	1.61

Self-Presentation on Instagram		
I disclose to present myself realistically.	4.98	1.34
<i>Male</i>	5.05	1.18
<i>Female</i>	4.95	1.39
When I disclose, it is to present my own individual characteristics.	5.36	1.34
<i>Male</i>		
<i>Female</i>	5.24	1.18
	5.40	1.39
I disclose to present my ideal self to my followers on Instagram.		
<i>Male</i>	4.32	1.76
<i>Female</i>		
	4.59	1.69
	4.24	1.78
Information Sharing		
I disclose to share information about a current issues.	4.34	1.71
<i>Male</i>		
<i>Female</i>	4.84*	1.55
	4.18	1.73
I disclose to share my experiences.		
<i>Male</i>	5.77	1.04
<i>Female</i>	5.69	1.16
	5.80	1.00
I disclose to share information and knowledge I am interested in.		
<i>Male</i>	5.41	1.26
<i>Female</i>	5.40	1.44
	5.41	1.19
Keeping Up with Trends		
I disclose to keep from falling behind in current issues.	3.75	1.71
<i>Male</i>		
<i>Female</i>	4.12	1.69
	3.63	1.71
I disclose because everybody does it.		
<i>Male</i>	3.55	1.64
<i>Female</i>	3.76	1.58
	3.48	1.66
I disclose so that I'm not left out.		
<i>Male</i>	3.22	1.68
<i>Female</i>	3.36	1.70
	3.17	1.64

Table 4
Consequences of Voluntary Self-Disclosure on Instagram

Psychological Well-Being		
Disclosing helps me get rid of my stress.	3.82	1.81
<i>Male</i>	3.83	1.94
<i>Female</i>	3.82	1.77
I feel psychological freedom after disclosing.	3.76	1.71
<i>Male</i>	4.05	1.90
<i>Female</i>	3.67	1.64
I feel psychological stability after disclosing.	3.61	1.60
<i>Male</i>	3.72	1.74
<i>Female</i>	3.57	1.55
Habitual Behavior		
I feel that I cannot control my disclosing behavior.	2.08	1.37
<i>Male</i>		1.72
<i>Female</i>	2.59*	1.19
	1.91	
I feel that I have to self-disclose on Instagram.		
<i>Male</i>	2.82	1.75
<i>Female</i>	3.09	1.86
	2.74	1.70
I feel uneasiness when I am not disclosing information on Instagram.		
<i>Male</i>	2.09	1.42
<i>Female</i>		
	2.28	1.59
	2.03	1.36
Relationship Management		
I feel intimate with others after disclosing.	3.55	1.58
<i>Male</i>	3.71	1.70
<i>Female</i>	3.50	1.55
Trust deepens between me and someone I am close to after disclosing.	3.86	1.69
<i>Male</i>		
<i>Female</i>	4.26*	1.72
	3.72	1.66
I have met new people through disclosing.		
<i>Male</i>	4.71	1.74
<i>Female</i>	4.93	1.61
	4.63	1.78

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Discussion of Findings

It is important to note that the use of technology and the lack of verbal and physical cues plays a part on self-disclosure online. According to Goffman, individuals' self-disclosure in accordance with the particular audience they are impressing. Interaction between family will be different than the interactions you encounter between members of a class group.

Findings showed that individuals do tend to feel as if they are building stronger relationships with others when they self-disclose which is similar to findings from the study by Waters and Ackerman (2011). Males seem to be more influenced online to show others their ideal self or popularity. This was unusual as a higher percent of males show how popular they are online compared to females. Research with URT shows that when individuals feel high levels of uncertainty they are less likely to self-disclose online, though in this study participants feel more of a connection once they disclose online. Impression Management Theory states that individuals often self-disclose to impress others, which aligns with results from this study, that show that individuals will often disclose to show their popularity. This results because often individuals want to put forward the best impression of themselves even if it isn't realistic, and they want others to find them acceptable.

Results showing that participants disclosed to share information about current issues was interesting because it explains that individuals are willing to disclose to share information, not only about themselves, but other topics that are relevant or important to them.

Physiological factors are also a contributing factor when self-disclosing on Instagram. The study found that there is also a need to self-disclose and often participants felt a lack of

control in regards to their online behavior. These results were unexpected, as the other significant findings showed no other behaviors behavior motivations.

Trust deepening when an individual discloses to another was significant and correlated with the concept that often the individual is hoping that by sharing information about oneself they will be given personal information in return.

Research is evident that individuals are constantly shaping the way others perceive them online, and when negative interpretations are involved, they have the tendency to turn away from negative interpretations (Tong, 2013). Instagram is becoming relevant for more users to join and this gives the chance for research to be examined to understand the reasons we share particular information about ourselves on Instagram. As the SNS grows, research to investigate self-disclosure will rise as the need for individuals to create an identity online increases.

Limitations and Future Directions

Limitations

The study was helpful in understanding several ways in which individuals use Instagram for self-disclosure. Limitations of this study would include the sample size, had there been a larger sample the results would have been span over a larger test group for the MANOVA analysis. The male sample size of 58 would help to be larger. It was also difficult to get the sample; a larger distribution pool would have increased the sample size. Content analysis could be used to examine the ways in which individuals self-disclose in correlation with a survey or focus group to test against.

Future Directions

It is evident that individuals base much of what they disclose on Instagram on what others will think of them. There are relational, habitual, and showing off concepts at play. Future

research could include the use of more URT as we try to understand what people will do to alleviate uncertainty on Instagram and the receivers motivations for the given disclosure. Interactions between genders can be more thoroughly analyzed by including a more in-depth survey. The survey could include a redirection of questions based on the gender of the participant to be analyzed. To extent on the results found, future research could be to examine the differences of self-disclosure across different cultures such as European, Asian and American cultures.

Conclusion

Instagram is making strides with their SNS, and it is evident that it will not be dissipating any time in the future. Many studies have been focusing on the motivations of self-disclosure as a means of contrasting social norms versus what an individual feels is the “acceptable face” for other viewers. Many previous studies have looked at the contrast between males and females on other SNS but Instagram is still a SNS to be explored. It would be informative to venture into how Instagram self-disclosure can change from culture to culture and to see what the similarities are as well. This research is meant to be the beginning of understanding self-disclosure and the motivations and consequences of using Instagram. This study has examined the differences between male and female interaction and the findings were interesting as they found that males are more likely to Show Off or show signs of Relationship Management. This was unique to this study because social norms would say that females are more likely to build trust in online relationships. Additionally, information from this study can leave to understanding more specific areas such as what are the specific areas of Relationship Management that are affected by Instagram self-disclosure. Results from the MANOVA tests ran in this study show that motivations and consequences for males were significantly higher than for females on Instagram.

In a study by Stone (2014) the research states that “Facebook has become a virtual space for individuals to connect socially, most students perceive Facebook as purely social, not a tool for instruction”. It is crucial to understand that Instagram has become more than a SNS for browsing for friends, but is also a place for an individual's image to be shaped and molded by images. Previous research has examined how individuals choose to self-disclose online and some research even claims that individuals are more interested in disclosing to distant friends than close ones online (Waters and Ackerman, 2011). Research has also found that users are largely impacted by how other individuals perceive them on the internet and will stray from any negative interpretations (Tong, 2013). There have also been areas of research that studies the differences and similarities between males and females on social media and much research has found that the level of physical attractiveness of the user is one of the most important factors in whether a user of the opposite sex will even “friend” the user (Wang et al., 2010).

Facebook is the largest social media platform in the world and this leads to a multitude of information that can be researched, but that doesn't mean that the research must stop there. Instagram is a SNS that has very little current research in terms of self-disclosure and this study has examine the motivations and consequences for using it. Research on Instagram can help bridge the gap between social media and the means to which individuals will go to self-disclose on Instagram, in accordance with the ways females and males interact online. There is a large opening for available research in this field and understanding self-disclosure on Instagram is incremental to understanding human interaction online. Online impressions have become more prevalent in studying human behavior and Instagram gives the opportunity to explore this field through photographs. It's true what they say, a picture really can be worth a thousand words.

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APPENDIX

Informed Consent Letter and Questionnaire

Informed Consent Letter for a Research Study entitled,

"To Share or Not to Share": A Study of Individual's Self-Representation on Instagram in

Accordance with Impression Management Theory

You are invited to participate in a research study to learn about the motivations and consequences on self-disclosure when using Instagram, a social media network. This study is being conducted by Breyanna Blackwell under the direction of Dr. Susan Waters in the East Tennessee State University Department of Media and Communication. You were selected as a possible participant because you are age 18 or older and an individual who uses Instagram. Taking part in this study involves completing a web survey that will take about 5 minutes. This survey contains questions about your opinions and perceptions about social relationships when using Instagram.

Your confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used.

Specifically, no guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet by any third parties. Only the principal investigator, her advisor and the ETSU IRB will have access to the data. The data will be password protected. Only summarized data will be presented at meetings or in publications.

There will be no direct benefits to you, but the findings will be useful to the mass communication profession and educators for understanding social relationships when self-disclosing on Instagram.

The chief risk is that possibly some of the questions may make you uncomfortable. You may skip any questions you do not want to answer.

If you have questions about this study, please contact Breyanna Blackwell at blackwellbm@etsu.edu or Dr. Susan Waters at watersse@etsu.edu. A copy of this document can be printed for you to keep.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board at 423/439-6054 for any questions you may have about your rights as a research subject. If you have any questions or concerns about the research and want to talk to someone independent of the research team or you cannot reach the study staff, you may call an IRB Coordinator at 423/439-6055 or 423/439/6002.

YOUR PARTICIPATION IS COMPLETELY VOLUNTARY. You are free not to participate or you may stop participating any time before you submit your answers.

If you understand the statements above, are at least 18 years old, and freely consent to be in this study. Continue the survey below.

Thank you!

Breyanna Blackwell

Questionnaire

(Waters & Ackerman, 2011 originally from Lee et al., 2008)

***Demographic Questions**

Sex

Male (1)

Female (2)

Age

Your age is:

18 - 24 (1)

25 - 34 (2)

35 - 44 (3)

45 - 54 (4)

55 - 64 (5)

65 - 74 (6)

75 - 84 (7)

85 or older (8)

Grade Level

Freshman (1)

Sophomore (2)

Junior (3)

Senior (4)

Graduate (5)

Faculty (6)

Other (7)

Ethnicity

White (1)

Black or African American (2)

American Indian or Alaska Native (3)

Asian (4)

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (5)

Other (6)

Marital Status

Married (1)

Widowed (2)

Divorced (3)

Separated (4)

Never married (5)

How do you agree with these motivations and consequences for self-disclosure on

Instagram? (*Choose from a 7-point Likert-type scale of 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree*)

***Level of Agreement**

1 – Strongly disagree

2 – Disagree

3 – Somewhat disagree

4 – Neither agree or disagree

5 – Somewhat agree

6 – Agree

7 – Strongly agree

MOTIVATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY SELF-DISCLOSURE

Information Storage

I disclose to save personal thoughts and pictures on Instagram.

I disclose to save memorable information.

I disclose to keep a personal record.

Relationship Management

Disclosures on Instagram serve as a meeting place for me and others.

I disclose to communicate with friends and family.

I disclose to maintain a close relationship with others.

I disclose to let people know my current affairs.

Entertainment

I disclose because I enjoy it.

I disclose as a source of an entertainment.

I disclose because it is fun.

Showing Off

I disclose to show off my ability.

I disclose to show off by commercializing and publicizing my activities.

I disclose to show that I am popular.

Self-Presentation on Instagram

I disclose to present myself realistically.

When I disclose, it is to present my own individual characteristics.

I disclose to present my ideal self to my followers on Instagram.

Information Sharing

I disclose to share information about a current issues.

I disclose to share my experiences.

I disclose to share information and knowledge I am interested in.

Keeping Up with Trends

I disclose to keep from falling behind in current issues.

I disclose because everybody does it.

I disclose so that I'm not left out.

CONSEQUENCES OF VOLUNTARY SELF-DISCLOSURE on Instagram

Psychological Well-Being

Disclosing helps me get rid of my stress.

I feel psychological freedom after disclosing.

I feel psychological stability after disclosing.

Habitual Behavior

I feel that I cannot control my disclosing behavior.

I feel that I have to self-disclose on Instagram.

I feel uneasiness when I am not disclosing information on Instagram.

Relationship Management

I feel intimate with others after disclosing.

Trust deepens between me and someone I am close to after disclosing.

I have met new people through disclosing.

VITA

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