The Company you keep and the image you project:
Putting your best face forward in online social networks

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Abstract

Impression management and self-presentation theories have long been applied to networking and interviewing situations. The use of personal WebPages, blogging sites and social networking sites has just recently become a part of the culture and vocabulary of interviewing and networking for personal and professional purposes. The goal of this research is to expand the application of impression management and self-presentation to social networking sites. Imitation Facebook pages were constructed based on the life of either a male or female participant, each being of average appeal. In a 3x3 factorial experiment, study participants ($N = 167$) viewed a Facebook page of a user with either a high, medium or low number of friends. The person they were viewing was represented with either a picture, video or text-only. This study found that the model *Facebook* user was perceived as being more popular, attractive, and self-confident when their social network includes a large (as opposed to small) number of friends. Conversely, the modality of representation did not affect participants' perceptions of the model user. Findings are discussed in the context of the literature on impression management, basking in reflected glory and self presentation, and open up new doors for designers and users to consider when constructing these virtual images of themselves and others.

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In a face-to-face networking or interviewing situation, it is very common for two individuals to exchange business cards, resumes and experiences with one another. More than just the swapping of a piece of paper, these acts constitute a presentation of themselves, the creation of an image or the maintenance of an impression. These professional and personal networking and interviewing scenes have gone beyond just the presentation of the self on a piece of paper or card. The use of virtual and on-line media for self-presentation and impression management has become more and more common in today's society.

Where people used to say "here is my business card, I will be in touch," they began to say "visit my website and I will be sure to check yours out as well" as more people started generating personal websites on the Internet. More recently the social networking sites of *MySpace, Facebook, livejournal* and *Match.com* have become part of the networking and interviewing vocabulary. While *livejournal* falls more under the category of a blogging site and *match.com* is designed for the online dating scene, *MySpace* and *Facebook* serve exclusively as virtual social networks where an individual is able to present and maintain a personal image of themselves for others to observe and interpret.

These sites allow for the building of a social network through the inclusion of others who also hold a *MySpace* or *Facebook* account. The construction of identities individually on your own site, as well as through the ways that one incorporates others into their social network on that site is the discussion of the work of Chandler (1998). In addition, Dőering (2002) applied many identity theories, self-presentation and computer-mediated communication theories to that of personal and home web pages. In this study, the application of these theories mapped the

impacts of the network society in connecting individuals and their personal webpage information as part of image maintenance within a larger social network.

The technology of online social networks clearly offers benefits for networking that are not available in face-to-face networking opportunities. To begin with, these sites offer the possibility of presenting a gallery of one's images and videos instead of a single image or interaction. This variety is likely to provide a more rounded view of the person. In addition to such advantages related to modality enhancements, online social networks have unique features, such as indicating the number of people in one's network. While it would be awkward to mention this fact in face-to-face networking meetings (about as awkward as changing make-up, hairstyle, and dress several times during an evening soiree), technological features of online social networks allow one to communicate such aspects of oneself automatically, routinely, and therefore casually. Park (2003) also analyzed the similarities between hyperlink network analysis (HNA) and social network analysis (SNA). Park (2003) was able to link the operational measures of social, communication, computer-mediated, internet and hyperlink networks to demonstrate how virtual hyperlinked social networks can expand one's personal and professional group of acquaintances as well as information beyond just normal face-to-face social networks. The differences between on and off-line social networks are many. Everything from the speed of connectivity to the sheer numbers of people that you may connect to is greater in online social networks as opposed to offline social networks. The way that one can present themselves online is very different as well. The question remains though whether these self-presentational features do indeed play a significant role in impression formation and management.

Literature review

We begin our investigation of answers to this question by first explicating the

connections between impression management, self presentation and online social networks, as

evident in psychology and interpersonal communication literatures.

Impression Management and Self Presentation

Tanis and Postmes (2003) define online impression management and self presentation by

explaining how it differs from face-to-face impression management. Online impressions are

managed by social cues (such as networks of friends and acquaintances) that are much more

prevalent through this medium, rather than in the face-to-face context. These impressions tend to

be more positive according to Tanis and Postomes (2003) because they are more readily

available. Walther's (1992) Social Information Processing Theory (SIP) extends the idea of

social cues to include the rates with which these cues are exchanged. With the ability to quickly

and constantly update and upgrade your impression of yourself on your personal website, or

social networking site, you have more managing power over your image, according to this

theory.

Leary and Kowalski (1990) define impression management and self presentation as it

relates to individual persons by using a two-component model. They conclude that impression

motivation and impression construction are important in understanding the way that someone

manages others' impressions of themselves. Impression motivation includes the goals, values

and an understanding of the current and desired images of one's self. Impression construction is

related to a person's self-concepts of themselves, role constraints, target images and social

images.

When applied to online personal websites, impression motivation might be the analysis of others' personal websites in deciding what to include on your own. This can include the motivation to have more (or less) online acquaintances (in the case of *Facebook*, more or less "friends") as compared to others. Impression construction might be the desire to be included (or not) in the online social networks of others or to include (or not) individuals within your social network. Both are considered methods of impression management and maintenance. Again, in the case of *Facebook,* sheer numbers of friends is part of the impression motivation, construction and maintenance of your image.

Morrison and Bies (1991) discuss the ways that feedback is part of managing people's impressions of you. The authors find that tactics for managing other's impression of you can sometimes hinder the communication process and sometimes help it in a face-to-face context. This can have an impact on whom, when and how feedback is given in the process of presenting yourself to others. Similar to impression motivation and construction, feedback in an online setting might include the inclusion (or not) of others in your online social network. Feedback on *Facebook* might be an invitation (or not) to become part of someone's online social network.

Impression management and self presentation are not just influenced by an individual's verbal behavior. Nonverbal behaviors also play an important part in the way that one maintains their self image and manages their own identity. DePaulo (1992) makes reference to Goffman (1959) in her discussion of the nonverbal aspects of self presentation. The concepts of control and maintenance of aspects of your own self image are first discussed by Goffman (1959) and then later by authors such as DePaulo (1992) Such language conveys a particular impression of a person.

O'Sullivan, Hunt and Lippert (2004) explain the connections between nonverbal and verbal language in the presentation and management of one's self in an online social network site. Information about a person is identified as "language of affiliation" (465) in the context of a mediated interaction. The researchers explain that verbal language (words) and nonverbal language (visual, non-text cues) serve as information to establish a sense of community within those interacting. They conceptualize technology as a process, product, communication "enhancer" and "replacer", as well as a synchronous medium for communication. It is safe to say, that according to O'Sullivan et.al, (2004) technology is made up of a large array of channels. When such nonverbal and verbal language is interpreted through these many channels, cues and markers specific to a particular online social network are discovered and interpreted. Not only do these cues serve to enhance one's image, but they also serve as a method of inclusion, almost an invitation to become part of a person's network.

In sum, the emergent literature on impression management in social networking sites points to the importance of cues and markers in the technological context of personal image presentation. The relative lack of non-verbal physical cues in an online setting compared to a face-to-face encounter (the so-called cuelessness phenomenon in CMC) is offset by the modality richness offered by social networking sites. People can post a rich diversity of non-verbal information, including a plethora of pictures and videos featuring oneself in ways that are designed to flatter and project a positive self-image. This facility alone serves to enhance the amount and rate of cues transmitted. But it's not the only way in which social networking sites allow for richer transmission of image-enhancing cues.

A more commonly seen cue is the size of one's social network, computed automatically by the site as and when a person be-friends others in the social network. The number of other

people in a given person's network may speak to the person's importance as a critical node in a network of friends and acquaintances, often considered important by network theorists. Visitors to an online social networking site may not be as sophisticated as network researchers in appreciating the nodal significance of the person. Do they even notice this cue, and if so, do they factor it in while forming impressions of the person? These are psychological questions pertaining to the image-enhancement potential of reflected glory of the size of one's social network.

Basking in Reflected Glory

Cialdini (1978) introduced the idea that people tend to BIRG, or 'bask in reflected glory' when it comes to the way they represent and associate themselves within a group. In a general sense, 'BIRG-ing' occurs when one chooses to accentuate the positive aspects of themselves by associating with specific others who will make them 'look good.' Conversely, the theory also recognizes that people tend to hide negative things with which they are affiliated.

Since the early days of Cialdini's BIRG-ing theories, much of the research and literature has revolved around people's associations with winning sports teams, or anything that shines a positive light on the way people are perceived by others. In other words, BIRG-ing is associated with any circumstance that allows for a person to benefit from and enjoy the successes of something with which they are associated.

Snyder (1986) examined how people manipulate associations with others in order to 'appear' different than those around them. The author notes the way social networks and group associations alter the appearance of an individual. Therefore, people tend to use careful consideration when choosing associations with other people. In the case of online social networks (such as *Facebook)* this is similar to the idea of impression motivation, construction

and maintenance. If someone is not motivated by the content or image of another, they might be

hesitant to include that person in their social network and might construct an image of

themselves without the inclusion of that other person. In other words, Snyder (1986) extended

the idea of "Basing in Reflected Glory" to include only those who reinforce that "glory," as part

of an image you wish to uphold.

In general, the company one keeps can be reflective of one's personality. Furthermore,

the size of one's company can by itself can convey certain positive impressions such as

popularity among peers, social nature, and so on. Therefore, we hypothesize:

> *H1: The greater the size of a person's online social network, the more positive the*
>
> *impressions formed of that person.*

Modality

The real value added aspect of online social networking sites is not simply that they can

routinely convey cues such as the size of one's social network but also allow for different

modalities of presentation, which may be used to manage one's image by orchestrating the

degree of disclosure of one's physical personality.

In a general sense, modality is defined as an attribute or circumstance that denotes mode

or manner, or a way of doing something. Within the field of information sciences and

communication technology, modality is defined as a path of communication between the human

and the computer. These paths between the computer and the user can be represented through

text, animation, videos, pictures or anything that communicates a message between the computer

and the user or multiple users through the computer.

The research and literature on modalities pays special attention to its application in group

interaction, especially in computer-mediated communication and within computer-supported

collaborative work groups. Jensen, Farnham, Drucker and Kollock (2000) in particular found that varying the modality within a computer-supported collaborative work group did not increase the cooperation within the group and actually was more distracting to the individual group members.

Conversely, Ramirez, Walther, Burgoon and Sunnafrank (2002) found modality to have a direct impact on the information people are able to acquire abut one another. In other words, varying modalities provide additional ways to seek and obtain information from others within a group. In terms of self presentation, Wynn and Katz (1997) examined the rhetoric created by varying modalities. The authors conclude that modality will vary the expressive nature of a person's home page and this has the potential to create alternative impressions of an individual interpreted by different users.

Similarly, the work of Johnson (2000) found that different modalities enhance self disclosure and self awareness among internet users. The author concludes that interpersonal evaluations are more likely to occur in situations where modalities are able to offer more information about the users. Tidwell and Walther (2002), found that the higher the level of the modality, the more information can be given and received about the different online communicators.

Finally, the work of Vazire and Gosling (2004) found that the modality is directly related to the impression management tactics utilized by a particular internet user. The authors found that perceptions of one another are altered when people manipulate the methods and modalities used to represent themselves.

Essentially, adding more modalities to one's site increases the perceptual bandwidth (Reeves & Nass, 2000) of information transmission. While text-only can convey rich verbal

information, pictures and full-motion video modalities can convey visual and non-verbal information.   Sundar (2000) found significant differences in impressions conveyed by text-only vs. text with picture vs. text with video. Burgoon, Bonito, Ramirez, Dunbar, Kam & Fischer (2002) found that the nonverbal cues made available by modality richness significantly impact the social judgments that CMC interactants make about each other. Therefore, we hypothesize:

> *H2: Impressions formed of a person on a social networking site will vary as a function of the modalities used on that person's page.*

Interaction Effect

In sum, the size of your social network and the type of modality you use to present oneself are both likely to play a significant role in shaping others' impressions of you. However, we have thus far discussed these effects as independent. However, possibilities do exist for a combined effect of these variables. For example, certain modalities might be cognitively demanding.   The distractive aspect of video modality (found in studies reviewed above) may take people's attention away from noticing the size of the person's social network. On the other hand, the vibrancy conveyed by video may additively combine with the size of one's network to boost the latter's effects on impression formation. This speaks to the literature mentioned above related to modality increasing the information that someone can know about an individual.

Method

In order to test the hypotheses, we conducted a 3 (high, medium or low number of friends in social network) x 3 (video, picture of text type of modality) full-factorial between-subjects experiment wherein participants were exposed to a person's page on the *Facebook* site with a high, medium or low number of friends listed on the page, and featuring the person either via a video accompanied by descriptive text, a picture and text, or simply a question mark and text.

The participants were randomly assigned to a condition. Gender was not considered in the assignment each participant to a computer terminal.

Participants

Participants included 167 undergraduate and graduate students at a large university from an entry level communications course. Among the participants who provided information (N=167), females comprised 54%. For race, among the participants who provided information, whites represented 88% of participants (N=154), African Americans represented 4% of participants, Asians represented 3% of participants, and other races represented 6%. The average age of participants in the study who provided information, was 19.64 with a standard deviation of 1.53. The youngest participant was 18 years of age and the oldest participant was 26 years of age. The age distribution was not normal and was skewed to the right. Among participants who provided information, 50% were Freshman, 20% were Sophomores, 15% were Juniors, 13% were Seniors, and 2% were graduate students. Of participants who provided information, 93% reported they were *Facebook* users.

Experimental Stimulus Materials

Webpages were designed to look like profile webpages on the online networking site *Facebook*. Two false names were chosen to represent a model of a male and a female *Facebook* user, "Mike Stock" and "Megan Sorofman". Nine versions of the webpage were constructed for each of them, representing all combinations of the values of both independent variables in the study, social network and modality.

Aside from the differences in size of social network and the modality on the web pages between conditions, the content of the model *Facebook* users' profiles were identical. Information presented on the model *Facebook* user's profile was gathered from the *Facebook*

feature "pulse" which lists the current *Facebook* trends at the local University as well as nationally. (See Appendices 1, 2 and 3)

Experimental Treatment Conditions

To manipulate the social network variable on the webpage of the model *Facebook* user, the researchers altered for both the number of "friends" at the school that the model user attended and the number of "friends" s/he had at other schools. The manipulation for size of social network was located on the left side of the profile page approximately halfway between the top and the bottom of the page. The low social network condition portrayed the model *Facebook* user as having nine "friends" at the school they were said to attend and six "friends" at different schools. In the 'medium' social network condition, the model *Facebook* user had 62 'friends' at the school they attend and 20 at other schools. The high social network condition portrayed the model *Facebook* user as having 221 "friends" at the school they were said to attend and 40 "friends" at different schools. These particular numbers of friends were selected because in discussing the site with colleagues and acquaintances, these were the "ballpark" numbers that were mentioned by most when talking about a member with a "few" friends, "some" friends and "many friends. A manipulation check illustrated that participants were aware of the number of "friends" the *Facebook* user was said to have in each of the conditions, such that participants in the low size of social network condition reported the model *Facebook* user as having a significantly lower number of friends (M=36.82, SD= 28.15) than their counterparts in the high size of social network condition reported (M=226.77, SD= 38.27).

To manipulate the modality variable on the webpage, the type of visual of the model *Facebook* user was varied between conditions. The manipulation was located on the upper left side of the page, where pictures are displayed on typical *Facebook* profiles. In the text only

condition, the model *Facebook* user did not display a photograph, rather the typical symbol of a question mark was displayed, which notifies *Facebook* members that the profile they are viewing does not contain a photograph of the user. In the picture condition, a still picture was displayed of the model *Facebook* user. In the video condition, the *Facebook* profile included a clip of the model *Facebook* user in which the user was shown in a chair repeating the information included in the rest of the profile. The individuals chosen to represent the model *Facebook* users were average looking, as determined by a pilot study. (See Appendices 1, 2 and 3)

Procedure

When participants arrived at the testing location, they were greeted and asked to sign an informed consent document. Participants were then led into a computer lab with approximately 16 working computers where they were introduced to the procedures of the experiment and randomly assigned to one of the nine conditions. The participants were then asked to be seated at the assigned computer and read the instructions on the sheet of paper covering the computer screen. Once they were finished reading the instructions, they were told to flip up the sheet of paper covering the computer screen and begin the experiment. In the text only and picture conditions, participants spent as much time as needed thoroughly examining the model *Facebook* user's profile. In the video condition, the participants were first instructed to put headphones on so that they were able to view and listen to the video clip included on the webpage. Everything else was identical to the other two modality conditions. After examining the webpage, the participants were instructed to replace the sheet of paper that was covering the computer screen prior to the experiment's start. They were then handed a paper-and-pencil questionnaire to fill out. Once participants were finished filling out the questionnaire they were debriefed, thanked for their participation, and dismissed.

Dependent Variables

The questionnaire was used to measure dependent variables related to impression formation—variables such as perceived pleasantness of personality, perceived popularity of the model *Facebook* user, perceived confidence, sexiness and attractiveness. There were 18 questions in this section, each with 7-point likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

The following measures , obtained from LaFontana and Cillessen (1999), was used to measure perceived popularity: (1) "It is easy for this person to make friends," (2) This person doesn't get. along well with others," (3) "I would consider hanging out with this person," (4) "This person seems to be well-liked by others," (5) "This person has an active social life," and (6) "This person seems popular." All the questions together, except question number 3, yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.82. Question 3 was used a separate variable, "desire to hang out with the model *Facebook* user."

We measured heterosexual appeal by using the following scales fro Zillmann and Bhatia (1989): (1) "This person seems easy to like," (2) "This person would not be fun at parties," (3) "This person has an attractive personality," (4) "People would find this person sexy," (5) "This person would be a desirable friend," and (6) "This person seems pleasant." Questions one, five, and six yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.7 and were combined into one variable in the analysis called 'pleasant.' Questions two and four were significantly correlated, so they were combined into a separate variable called 'sexy.' Question three was treated as a single-measure variable that we labeled "attractiveness."

To measure perceptions of generalized self-confidence, questions similar to those used by Bell (1967) were employed: (1) "This person does not feel inferior," (2) "This person is

capable of handling any social situation," (3) "This person cares about what other people think of them," (4) "This person feels uncomfortable entering a crowded room alone," (5) "This person is shy," and (6) "This person does not make a good first impression." Questions one, four, five and six yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.67 and were combined into one variable called 'self-confidence.' Questions two and three were eliminated from the analysis.

In addition, the questionnaire asked nine cued recall questions to measure memory for profile content, including those pertaining to the model user's 'favorite bands,' 'favorite movies,' 'favorite books' and 'number of friends listed.'

Participants were asked to fill in a section of the questionnaire to inform researchers of their basic demographic information including age, gender, race, major and academic standing. Finally, several questions were asked regarding the participants' use of the *Facebook* online networking site. If participants were not *Facebook* users, they were told to skip over the final section of the questionnaire.

<center>Results</center>

The size-of-social-network (or Number of Friends) independent variable was collapsed to form two levels such that the low and medium levels were combined and labeled "low" because no significant mean differentiations were found between the low and medium conditions. Therefore, a series of 2x3 ANOVAs was performed to detect the main effects of the two independent variables and the interactions between them.

In the full-factorial ANOVA with "perceived pleasantness of the model *Facebook* user" as the dependent variable, a main effect was found for size of social network, $F(1, 155)=4.97$, $p<.05$ (See Figure 1.), such that subjects in the high size of social network condition ($M= 3.46$, $SD= 0.43$) rated the model *Facebook* user as significantly more pleasant than their counterparts

in the low size of social network condition (*M*=2.62 , *SD*=0.39). Modality did not show a significant main effect on this dependent variable. The two-way interaction between modality and network size was also not significant.
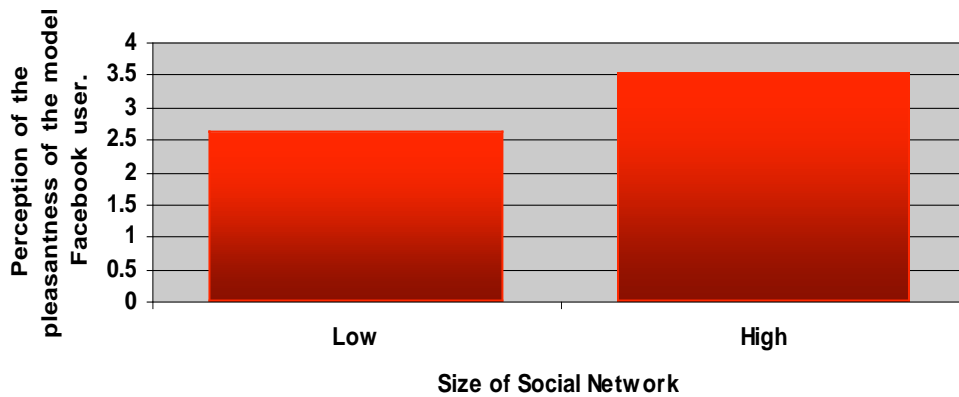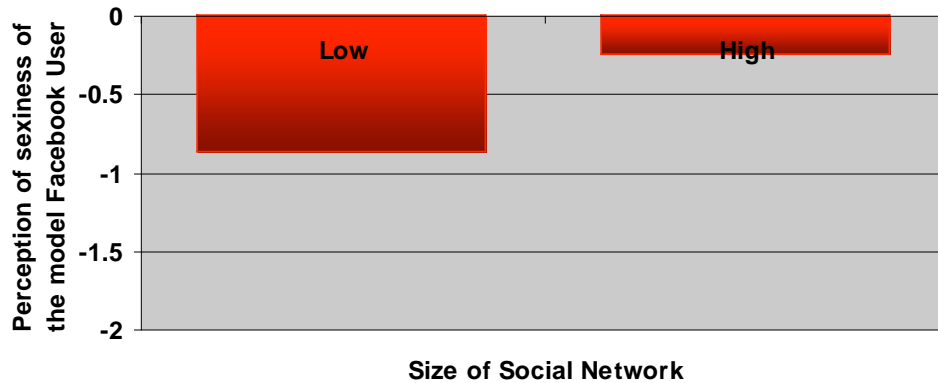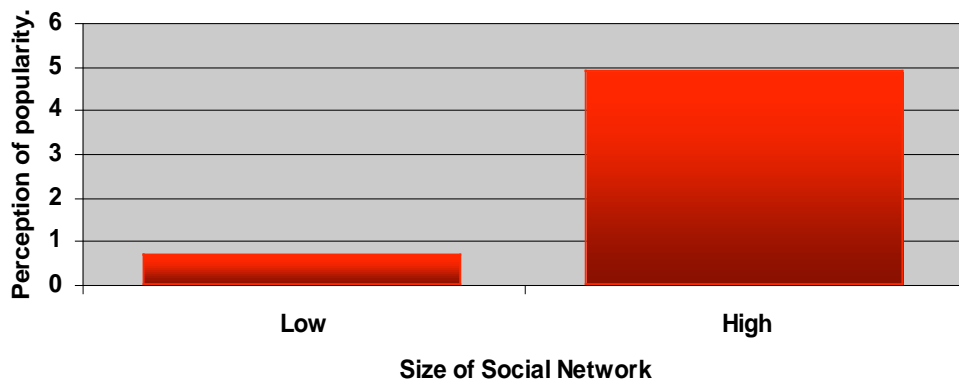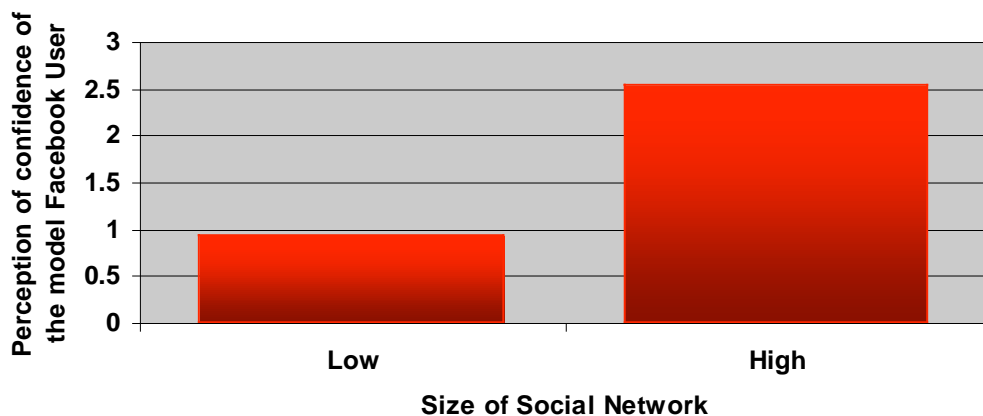

Figure 1. Testing the size of social network variable upon the perception of pleasantness variable

A main effect for size of social network was also found for "perceived sexiness of the model *Facebook* user," $F (1,155) = 12.8$, $p<.05$ (See Figure 2), such that subjects in the high size of social network condition (*M*= -0.25 , *SD*= 0.34) rated the model *Facebook* user as significantly more sexy than their counterparts in the low size of social network condition (*M*= -0.87, *SD*= 0.30). Modality did not show a significant main effect on this dependent variable. The two-way interaction between modality and network size was also not significant.
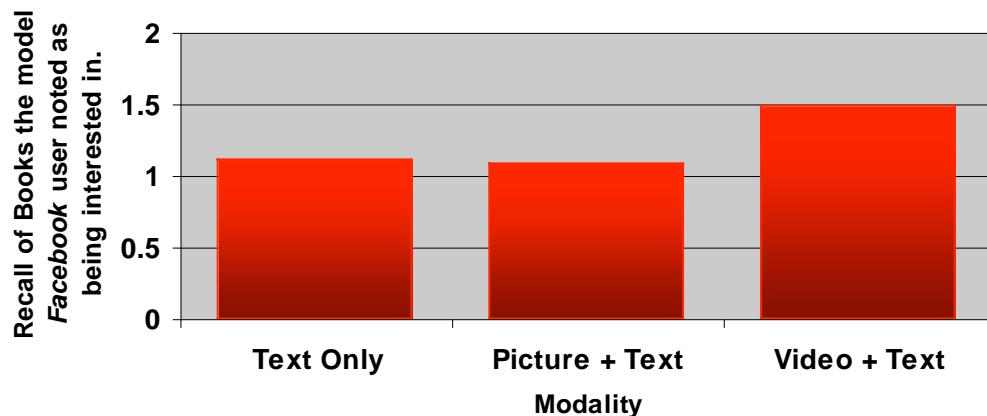
Figure 2. Testing the size of social network variable upon the perception of sexiness variable

Perceived popularity as the dependent variable (or not) also varied significantly as a function of the size of social network, $F(1, 152) = 31.65$, $p<.0001$, (See Figure 3), such that subjects in the high size of social network condition ($M=4.90$, $SD= 0.82$) rated the model *Facebook* user as being significantly more popular than their counterparts in the low size of social network condition ($M= 0.67$, $SD= 0.74$). Modality did not show a significant main effect on this dependent variable. The two-way interaction between modality and network size was also not significant.

Figure 3. Testing the size of social network variable upon the perception of popularity variable.

Ratings of "perceived confidence of the model *Facebook* user" were also significantly affected by size of social network, $F(1, 154)=14$, $p<.0005$, (See Figure 4), such that subjects in the high size of social network condition ($M= 2.53$, $SD= 0.48$) rated the model *Facebook* user as significantly more confident than their counterparts in the low size of social network condition ($M= 0.92$, $SD= 0.43$). Modality did not show a significant main effect on this dependent variable. The two-way interaction between modality and network size was also not significant.

Figure 4. Testing the size of social network variable upon the perception of confidence variable

In the full-factorial ANOVA with "recall of books" as the dependent variable, a main effect was found for modality, $F(2, 158)=5.10$, $p<.05$ (See Figure 5.), such that subjects in video plus text condition ($M=1.49$, $SD=0.14$) recalled the books that the model *Facebook* user noted as being interested in significantly more than subjects in the picture plus text condition ($M=1.09$, $SD=0.13$) and the text only condition ($M=1.11$, $SD=0.14$). A significant difference was not found between the "recall of books" in the text only condition and the picture plus text condition. Size of social network did not show a significant main effect on this dependent variable. The two-way interaction between modality and network size was also not significant.

Figure 5. Testing the modality variable upon the recall of books variable.

In sum, results show that the larger the number of friends one has on a social networking site, the more popular one is perceived to be. Size of one's network also positively impacts how visitors to the page rate the person's confidence, pleasantness, and sexiness.

Discussion

Generally speaking, the number of friends that you have within your *Facebook* social network affects other people's perceptions of you. A person's social network acts as a cue in

determining the disposition of that individual. In other words, you are perceived as being more popular, sexy, and attractive and have a higher level of self confidence, when your social network on your *Facebook* page includes a greater number of friends.

As Tanis and Postmes (2003) suggested, online communication and networking allow for individuals to manage their image more easily. For instance, the findings of this study show that the size of a person's social network, information that often does not normally surface in a face-to-face interaction but does on a social networking site, positively influences perceptions of popularity, confidence, pleasantness and sexiness of the user.

The results of this study speak to the literature on impression management, suggesting that online media offer new ways/tools of conveying impression-enhancing information. Online communication allows the user a certain amount of control in the impression that they give off to others. Literature on Basking in Reflected Glory suggests that individuals often choose to accentuate and bring to light those associations that make them appear in a positive light (Cialdini, 1978). Based on the findings of this study, individuals may choose to accentuate (if they have a large social network) or hide (if they have a small social network) the amount of friends that they have in their social network with the hopes of others perceiving them as being more popular, self-confident, pleasant and sexy. This would lend support to Walther's contention of hyperpersonal communication (CMC being more socially desirable than equivalent FtF communications) arising from selective or "optimized" self-presentation (Walther, 1996).

Online social network designers might also consider these findings in the production and updating of current sites. They might consider a way to make the modalities of a website less distracting and the network of each individual more obvious on a person's personal website.

Further individuals that use online networking sites may choose to use the findings of this study when deciding what information to bring attention to when creating or updating their webpages.

Conversely, the modality that you select to represent yourself on your *Facebook* page does not appear to affect your appearance to other people. Your perceived popularity, attractiveness and self-confidence do not seem to be altered as a function of the modality in which you choose to represent yourself. Interestingly enough, the modality that you select to represent yourself on your *Facebook* page does have an affect on what people remember about you. This speaks to the distraction potential of some modalities. Findings of this study support the work of Jensen, Farnham, Drucker and Kollock (2000) who found that varying modality increased distractions among individual group members in computer-supported collaborative work groups. The video modality in our study does not appear to have distracted the participants from remembering profile information about the model *Facebook* user. If anything, it seems to have helped aid memory for the books read by the Facebook user. While the "richer" modality does not seem to affect certain impressions formed as a function of size of social network (because of the absence of two-way interactions), some image-enhancing information about a person with low number of friends might be amplified with a video presentation. As a result, using the richer modality may help those with a small circle of friends because it may convey serve to highlight other potentially image-enhancing information. Again, users of these social networking sites might consider these findings when deciding whether or not to use different modalities on their websites. Designers might also be inspired by these results to find ways of capitalizing on the richness of new modalities, especially their ability to communicate visual and non-verbal information.

Limitations and Future Research

The researchers did not control for gender. That might still have had a small impact on the results, in that participants were just randomly assigned to a computer, regardless of the participant and model *Facebook* user's gender. Future research might consider controlling for gender, and not just randomly assigning participants to any particular computer which showcases just any particular *Facebook* user.

Future research might also look at the types of candid pictures posted on the user's site or the way that the user paints an entire picture of themselves as a measure of attractiveness. To extend the work of Zillman and Bhatia (1989), a study comparing tastes in music, movies and books (as displayed on a model *Facebook* user's page) to how people perceive the attractiveness, confidence and popularity of the model would also be an interesting follow-up study. One might add to their study, the way that the varying modality used on a personal website might help an individual to more easily recall the information about a person's favorite books, music and movies. Additionally, the size of the person's social network might contribute or detract from the attractiveness of the individual just based on their music, movie and book preferences.

In this way, Facebook and indeed all online social networking sites offer a platform for experimentally studying the role of different content-related as well as technology-related cues in promoting positive impressions in an ecologically valid manner.

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Appendix 1.

Model *Facebook* webpage used in experiment.
Text Only Condition-Low Social Network Condition

Appendix 2.

Model *Facebook* webpage used in experiment.
Picture Condition-Medium Social Network Condition

Appendix 3.

Model *Facebook* webpage used in experiment.
Video Condition (video began when the mouse crossed the black box on the left side of the screen) -High Social Network Condition