MOTIVATIONAL USE OF TWITTER

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

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and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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Dr. Stacey Woelfel
I dedicate this thesis, the culmination of twenty years of education, to my loving parents, Russell and Bonnie. Their encouragement and support has fueled my efforts to achieve excellence in and out of the classroom. I cannot express in enough words the importance of their presence in my life.
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MOTIVATIONAL USE OF TWITTER

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ABSTRACT

Internet social networking devices like Twitter have increased in popularity between 2005 and 2010. Twitter is unique because of the brevity in which users interact with other users; Twitter messages, or tweets, are limited to 140 characters. Often in those messages are hyperlinks to other Web sites. Even when people are connected to Twitter, they feel compelled to click the hyperlink and navigate to another page. This thesis employs an experiment to determine what motivates Twitter users to click the hyperlinks in tweets.

A total of 153 Twitter users completed surveys about how they use Twitter. Rodgers and Sheldon’s Web Motivation Inventory was used to gauge how they use the Internet. Those answers were compared to the responses they gave from looking at tweets they had never seen before. It is hypothesized that there is a “match” between a person’s main Internet motivation and how they interact with tweets. The experiment also sought to find a difference between tweets from a person versus an organization.

A combination of motivation research, the functionalist theory of psychology and the uses and gratifications theory support the hypotheses.
CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

The Internet contains a seemingly infinite number of hyperlinks to countless Web sites. With an abundance of choices, it is not crystal clear why people choose to go to certain pages. While there are the rudimentary sites people go to on a daily basis, something motivates them to click on some hyperlinks and ignore others.

One of the more peculiar Internet tools to emerge in the past few years is Twitter, a social networking site. It allows users to submit “tweets” to Twitter.com, which are visible to other users. Different users have different reasons to use Twitter. Some use it to let others know what they are doing, some use it to see what others are doing, and others use it to satisfy some other internal need.

Tweets often include hyperlinks provided by a user; the hyperlink takes a user to a different Web site. The decision to click on hyperlinks and ignore others is in the hands of the user. Users have a number of reasons to justify their decision-making process. Maybe they clicked a hyperlink because it was tweeted by a friend; or perhaps it was a hyperlink to a familiar site. People have individual tastes and preferences, which also influence their motivation to act. Many times, people turn to media in order to satisfy a need, and choose a specific media that fits their tastes. Several studies have been conducted to better understand the relationship between people and their media use. This study narrows in on the social networking site Twitter and asks: What motivates Twitter users to click the hyperlinks provided in tweets?
For the past few years, Twitter has been gaining in popularity, and lately, has seen a spike in the number of users. In February 2009, there were about eight million users; the number jumped to 75 million by the end of the year (RJMetrics, 2010). It is possible Twitter is merely a fad, with an impending trip to obscurity arriving in a few years. However, Twitter is worth studying because it provides insight into why people find social Internet tools appealing.

This research has value for businesses, news organizations, companies, non-profits, and corporations. These entities see the value of Twitter and have created profiles in order to reach out to consumers. Marketers tap into Twitter as a way of promoting a brand or an image. Companies like Old Navy tweet its latest shopping specials (OldNavy Twitter, 2010). Nearly every tweet in its account has a hyperlink taking a user from the Twitter page to the Old Navy Web site. The findings of this study are useful to companies like Old Navy because it will discover the ways people use Twitter. Companies will be able to tailor their message in a specific way in order to attract new consumers. News organizations like CNN also provide hyperlinks in its tweets leading people to its Web site (CNN Twitter, 2010). CNN can use this research to alter the way it tweets to drive more traffic to its home page.

By understanding why people click on hyperlinks in Twitter, it is possible to apply this research to hyperlink clicking habits on other sites. The habits might carry over to social networking sites, online stores, or during information searches. Those studying psychology, sociology, communication, journalism, and even businesses would have a better grasp as to how people navigate through the Internet by clicking hyperlinks.
Research in support of the thesis question comes from numerous studies of motivation, the functional theory of psychology, and the uses and gratifications theory.
CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW

Motivation

Researchers have developed a variety of definitions for motivation. Theorists assume “people initiate and persist at behaviors to the extent that they believe the behaviors will lead to desired outcomes or goals” (Deci and Ryan, 2000, p. 277). Motivation concerns energy, direction, persistence, and equifinality (Ryan and Deci, 2000, p. 69). Researchers explore the psychological value people ascribe to goals, people’s expectations about attaining goals, and the mechanisms that keep people moving toward selected goals (Deci and Ryan, 2000). This section details the various factors that influence motivation.

Activating Motivations

There are different theories suggesting alternative reasons people are motivated. Fiske and Maddi (1961) support the arousal theory, in which people seek to achieve and maintain an optimum level of bodily arousal. The incentive theory states that a valued inducement will motivate people to behave in certain ways (Kassin, 2006). If there is a valuable incentive to be gained, people will make the effort to earn the incentive (Kassin, 2006). There are primary incentives, such as food, drink, and physical contact, and there are symbolic incentives, which include monetary, social, status, and sensory incentives (LaRose, Mastro, and Eastin, 2001). Past experiences and consequences of previous decisions influence people to act (Ryan and Deci, 2000).
The Self-Determination Theory posits that people need to feel capable, autonomous, and socially secure (Ryan and Deci, 2000, and Sheldon et al., 2001). The theory explores the difference between the content of goals or outcomes and the processes through which the outcomes are pursued (Deci and Ryan, 2000). These two differences interact and influence functioning, well-being, behavior, and mental health. The Self-Determination Theory is a “growth-oriented activity” (Deci and Ryan, 2000, p. 230). People do not passively wait for deficiencies to occur; they act on their internal and external environments and engage in an activity that strengthens their coherence (Deci and Ryan, 2000).

Types of Motivations

Researchers have created a number of categories in which motivations can be placed. Motivations can be cognitive or affective (McGuire, 1974). Cognitive motives drive the need for information and attainment of ideal states. Affective motives consider a person’s feelings and attainment of emotional states. There are four other motivating drives that can fall into either one of these two superseding motivations, as explained in the following paragraph.

Deci and Ryan (2008) indicate that there are four types of human motivation: autonomous, controlled, intrinsic, and extrinsic. When people are driven by autonomous motivation, they behave with a sense of choice and personal freedom. Controlled motivation is a result of pressures and demands from forces “perceived to be external to the self” (p. 14). A person is intrinsically motivated if they choose to do something
interesting and “spontaneously satisfying” (p. 14). People are also extrinsically motivated if they act in order for some “separate consequence” to occur (p. 15). All four of these motivations could be either cognitive or intrinsic. Just as previous experiences and consequence alter motivation, so does the presence and influence of a person’s culture.

Culture

The culture in which a person is raised in affects their needs and motivation priorities (Kassin, 2006). “Cultural and developmental influences produce variations in the importance of goals, the pursuit of which, in turn, yields different satisfaction of basic needs and different levels of well-being” (Ryan and Deci, 2000, p. 76). Cultural differences in motivation are described in two ways: conjoint and disjoint agency. A person’s conjoint agency integrates personal interests with the interest of other close members. Their disjoint agency separates those two interests (Markus and Kitayama, 2003). The personal needs and motivations of one person occasionally conflict with the needs and motivations of others.

At any given time, a person might have multiple reasons to become motivated. Unfortunately, it is quite difficult to specifically measure every person’s motivation because it involves an intricate combination of interacting reasons for behavior. A person may choose to exercise on a daily basis because they are motivated to stay in shape and boost self-esteem. On another day, they might exercise for the same reasons, and in addition, improve their appearance. The reasons for motivation become more complex.
As shown later in this thesis, researchers suggest people’s motivations to use a media often fall into a list of motivations created by the researcher. Developed theories can explain the more common, overarching behaviors of people, but they cannot completely explain every motivation. They simply exist to help make better sense of people’s motivations. This study acknowledges that pinpointing motivations for every individual is nearly impossible. It affirms that conceptualizing broad inventories of motivation safely describes a significant portion of a person’s behavior, but not their entire behavior.

There is reason to believe a person has a motivation that occurs more than others. Given the more prevalent presence of a particular motivation, the media selected to satisfy a need might be easier to predict. What follows is a brief description of the large theoretical topic of functionalism. This theory focuses on the functions and purposes of human behavior, and how people look for a situation that “matches” their motivation.

**Functionalism**

Functionalism understands that “the meaning of a behavior can only be understood with reference to its function for the person who behaves” (Rogers and Sheldon, 2000, p. 86). The theory posits that “people can and do perform the same actions in the service of different psychological functions” (Clary et al., 1998, p. 1517). It suggests that when a specific situational opportunity matches a person’s need, that person is highly motivated to fulfill that need (Rodgers and Sheldon, 2002). This is called the
matching theory. Clary et al. (1998) discovered people participated in certain volunteer activities that matched a need they wanted to satisfy.

Functionalism provides a framework for people making decisions based on their psychology, their outcome sought, and their environment. For example, Harlow and Cantor (1994) explain that two college students facing a difficult assignment approach it in different ways based on many factors, including their psychology. One student might seek reassurance from peers, while the other student might choose to study harder for instrumental improvement. They choose their strategies based on their reasons for doing the activity. The context and available accessible opportunities are happenstance occurrences that may or may not influence their selected action. The presence of media is one element that influences context. Mass communication interacts with people and their decision-making processes.

*Functionalism and Media*

Given functionalism’s broad application to human behavior, this section hopes to simplify its role in media. Anderson and Meyer (1975) explored three basic perspectives on the functions of media. With each perspective, they noted a fault.

Four Functions

One of the perspectives is the “four functions approach” (Anderson and Meyer, 1975, p. 12), which suggests media has four main functions: surveillance, make sense of people’s activities, reflect society’s values, and entertainment (Laswell, 1948, Wright,
This perspective determines these four are the sole functions of media, and are applicable to all forms of mass communication, whether it is television, radio, newspaper, etc. Media performs only these functions for society. To clarify, these are functions the media performs, and not people’s reasons for media use.

Such a limited number of functions suggest media cannot perform any other function. As more media research has been conducted, it has become clear that there is little redeeming value in only studying the media’s intended functions, especially when new media emerge. Instead, it has become more worthwhile to uncover people’s intentions to use media because their reasons depended on the media selected. This four functions approach inappropriately treats media as singular units (television, radio, newspaper) rather than recognizing the numerous outlets that subsume a media (for television: NBC, ABC, CBS). In the case of television, this perspective assumes network and cable channels all perform the same four functions to the same degree. For example, if surveillance was the main function of television, under this “four function” perspective, all channels’ main function would be surveillance. Channels such as MTV, Nickelodeon, and Comedy Central would perform the surveillance function more than the entertainment function. It is clear this perspective cannot be used since there is no question different channels perform different functions. CNN certainly performs the surveillance function, while FX performs the entertainment function, even though they are both in the same medium.
Systems Analysis

The second perspective is a “systems analysis approach” (Anderson and Meyer, 1975, p. 12). In other words, media organizations exist and interact together to create a “stable and permanent social system” (p. 12). Their existence produces consequences on people and groups who are a part of the system. Media organizations interact with other media, businesses, and people to help create a balanced society. A balanced society is absent of dysfunction. Media serves a function of maintaining a stable social system.

This perspective naively assumes that media can create a stable environment. It is not clear at what point is society considered stable or unstable since such a determination of polar opposites is quite immeasurable. Society is more or less in a fluctuating state or stability and instability. What prevents society from maintaining a stable environment is people’s frequently changing needs. Media responds to people’s needs in an attempt to attain social stability, but media does not exact complete stability. An example of societal change: the classic Clark Gable line, “Frankly my dear, I don’t give a damn” ruffled some feathers in 1939. By 2010, seemingly every dirty word imaginable has appeared in cinema, rendering “damn” as innocuous. Whether or not these films contribute to a stable environment, it merely demonstrates how society changes values and identity over time.

Uses and Gratifications

The third perspective stems from the uses and gratifications theory. The theory provides that people chose media to help gratify an internal need. There are a multitude of needs, including information seeking, escapism, socialization, and diversion, just to
name a few. The focus is on the media user; it explores what people use the media for and their reasons for selecting a particular media. This perspective ignores the media’s intended function as an organization and welcomes the individual’s intent to use a media. For example, a show on the History Channel might have the intention to provide information. A viewer’s intention to watch might solely be to escape from reality for an hour. The user is gratified through accessing a media that fulfills his intention, and not the media’s intended function.

This third perspective does not acknowledge the less common functions of media; it only focuses on popular reasons people use media. Data collection in uses and gratifications research often asks participants to self-observe their media behavior. They inform researchers of their motivations to use media. Unfortunately, researchers organize the most popular responses into a few broad categories, which become functions media performs for people. Researchers conclude a short list of common functions and ignore the numerous, yet less popular motivations. These results are generalized and improperly applied to the entire media audience.

When selecting a functionalist media perspective from these choices, the uses and gratifications perspective appears the most appropriate for this study. The four functions approach is too general because it assumes all media perform the same functions. The systems analysis approach is too vague and difficult to measure. It also fails to determine how different media have an impact on influencing societal stability. The uses and gratifications theory addresses the multiple reasons people choose specific media that match their motivations.
The Uses and Gratifications Theory

It took more than twenty years for the uses and gratifications theory to earn its name. Before its birth, researchers had been conducting studies on media use; the earliest examining the effect media had on people. Over time, studies went in a different direction: it looked at the needs people had and what media helped satisfy those needs. Researchers began to examine how people were selecting media and the motivations behind their decisions. This change into an audience-centered research led to the birth of the uses and gratifications theory. The theory continues development as new media evolve.

History

When reflecting on studies conducted in the first half of the 20th century, media researchers note how there was a failure to accurately observe people’s use of media. Research in this field has its origins in the 1940’s. One of the earliest studies found radio soap opera fans had three reasons for tuning in (Herzog, 1944). The reasons were emotional release, escapism, or advice seeking. Years later, Berelson (1949) discovered how a newspaper strike negatively affected farmers who depended on the newspaper. One setback of these early studies was that researchers did not see the value of “cataloguing people’s subjective reasons” for media use (Baran and Davis, 2003, p. 259). Instead, they sought “explanations for the consequences of media use” (p. 259). Media research at this time was also concerned with people’s behavioral use of media. These
early researchers were suspicious of answers from participants because they deemed the answers subjective, and not truly indicative of the participants’ motives (Baran and Davis, 2003). Eventually, researchers became aware that audience needs was just as important as communicators aims, and that communication effects was altered by audience requirements (Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch, 1973). Also, they became more aware of the importance of how an active audience is a factor in media effects (Baran and Davis, 2003). These discoveries occurred around the time of the formal development of the uses and gratifications theory in the early 1970’s.

The Uses and Gratifications Theory

Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1973) formulated that the uses and gratifications theory must incorporate seven areas of research:

(1) The social and psychological origins of (2) needs, which generate (3) expectations of (4) the mass media or other sources, which lead to (5) differential patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in (6) need gratifications and (7) other consequences, perhaps mostly unintended ones (p. 510).

The uses and gratifications theory suggests individuals select different media for different reasons, and their selections are motivated by a personal need they want fulfilled. The researchers did observe that the uses and gratifications theory rests on the assumption that people are aware of their needs and are able to identify their sources of satisfaction (Katz, Gurevitch, and Haas, 1973, p. 20).

Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1973) determined the uses and gratifications perspective has three research goals: (1) to understand motives for media use, (2) to
explain how media are used by individuals to satisfy needs, and (3) to identify the outcomes that follow from needs, motives, and media use.

Some uses and gratifications researchers create descriptions of common media uses, collect data, measure the frequency and importance of the uses, and conclude the results to obtain gratification factors correlated with media use. Other researchers modify this approach to observe differences between gratifications sought and gratifications obtained. There is more explanatory power in gratifications sought than obtained (Palmgreen, Wenner, and Rayburn, 1981).

People seek out the media either for the content or the experience. These two dimensions of media use are characterized as content gratifications and process gratifications (Cutler and Danowski, 1980, Stafford and Stafford, 1996). Content gratifications are measured by the messages in the medium, while process gratifications concern how the media itself is used (Cutler and Danowski, 1980). For example, one person is gratified watching CNN because of the informative content they learn. Another person watching CNN is gratified because they are leisurely watching TV and not working at the office.

Researchers have found external and internal circumstances factor into media use. Sociological factors, environmental conditions, and psychological dispositions independently and collectively come into play (Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch, 1973).
External Influences of Seeking Media for Gratification

Various social situations can encourage people to seek media for gratification. Tension and conflict arises in social situations, leading people to seek easement through media (Katz and Foulkes, 1962). Social situations create an awareness of problems, and media provides information to solve those problems (Edelstein, 1973). A social situation fails to provide a real life opportunity to satisfy certain needs. Media use can provide complementary, supplementary, or substitute servicing for those needs (Rosengren and Windahl, 1972). The affirmation and reinforcement of values arise out of social situations. The process is facilitated by media use (Dembo, 1972). Social situations breed familiarity of media, and people must monitor that familiarity to sustain valued group membership with others (Atkins, 1972). These theorized reasons can demonstrate how social situations predict random media use.

A unique theory is that people don’t have a choice over what media they select. Bogart (1965) supports the idea that exposure to mass media and selection of one media is not a purposeful activity. Instead, the number of media options creates an environment where choice is mere happenstance and unintentional.

Internal Influence of Seeking Media for Gratification

A person’s social and psychological characteristics, skill, and experience affect media choice (Grace-Farfaglia et al., 2006). When reviewing earlier research, Blumler (1979) discovered three common motivations driving people to media: information-seeking, diversion, and personal identity shaping. The cognitive, information-seeking
person attempts to discover more about society and the world. Diversion can be from boredom or constraints of daily life; it can also include seeking excitement. McGuire (1974) speculated that as “pitiful” the satisfactions mass communication offers people, those satisfactions might still be better than real life alternatives, resulting in the need for diversion (p. 169). Identity shaping adds salience to something important in a person’s life. In certain cases, people shape their behavior based on how they observe others through media. Through this, the audience obtains gratifications from interpersonal similarity, by matching one’s behaviors to those depicted in mass media (McGuire, 1974, Blumler, 1979). It is not an external influence, but rather a person’s observation and duplication of a stimulus.

As mentioned before, individuals use mass communication to connect or disconnect themselves with family, friends, and society (Katz, Gurevitch, and Haas, 1973). Other research argues that a need for social contact is the basic motivation for media use (Nordenstreng, 1970). Communication theorists note the usefulness of mass communication in connecting people to human networks (McGuire, 1974). Rubin, Perse, and Barbato (1988) found six reasons people feel compelled to communicate with others: pleasure, affection, inclusion, escape, relaxation, and control. This last study is an example of researchers creating an inventory to explain the many reasons people use media. Different inventories have appeared in other studies depending on the type of medium.
Gratifications Through Different Media

Since the formulation of the uses and gratifications theory, studies focusing on particular mediums have produced different explanations for people’s media use. Mediums offer a unique combination of characteristic contents, typical attributes, and typical exposure situations (Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch, 1973). The combination of attributes renders media more or less adequate for the satisfaction of different needs (Katz, Gurevitch, and Haas, 1973). Rosengren and Windahl (1972) claim almost any type of content may serve basically any type of function. Yet, “all channels do not satisfy all motives equally well” (Graham, Barbato, Perse, 1993, p. 173). People are aware of what functions might be served by exposure to one medium versus another (McGuire, 1974). Mediums are selected depending on the gratification sought and obtained.

Music

Researchers have had a difficult time creating a consistent inventory of reasons for listening to music. North, Hargreaves, and Hargreaves (2004) found the various social and interpersonal contexts in which people engage in determine their selection of music in a given event. They also determined people’s liking for music changed depending on whom they were with and where they were. Complicating the inventories is the understanding that people do not always direct their full attention to music listening. Often, it is merely background noise while a person performs another activity. It is harder to decipher motivations for a secondary activity. Roe (1985) believe atmosphere creation and mood control, silence filling and passing the time, and attention to lyrics are three
main adolescent motivations to listening to music. Yet, those motivations do not necessarily apply to every music genre.

People who prefer traditional radio to satellite radio use it for entertainment and information. Convenience, lack of commercials, quality and increased choices are reasons to listen to new media radio (Free, 2005). In one study, MP3 players rated highest as an entertainment resource compared with satellite radio, streaming Internet radio, and AM/FM radio (Alabarran et al., 2006).

Television

Inventories across different studies over the use of television reveal some duplicate motivations which reinforce their validity. McQuail, Blumler, and Brown (1974) found diversion, personal relationships, personal identity, and surveillance as reasons for television use. Palmgreen and Rayburn (1979) found seven gratifications for public television use: relaxing, learning about things, communication utility, forgetting, passing time, companionship, and entertainment. Relaxation, habit, entertainment, information, and escape are also reasons to use to TV (Rubin, 1983). These studies show how two researchers can create separate inventories explaining the use of TV, with none of them being completely wrong. Is there a difference in “diversion” versus “passing time?” Perhaps there is, perhaps there isn’t. Ultimately, in the countless situations and opportunities a person engages in, there are a multitude of motivations that arise. These inventories demonstrate the variety of explanations for media use. Medias can be used with or without other media. This is especially true for the Internet, which has been the
focus of many uses and gratifications studies in the past decade.

Internet Behavior

In understanding media use, the uses and gratifications theory takes a user-level view rather than a mass-exposure perspective (Klapper, 1963). This view is well suited for examining Internet use given the interactivity and user-focused nature of the Internet (Stafford, Stafford, and Schkade, 2004). This warrants the application of the uses and gratifications theory to understand Internet motivations.

What do people use it for?

Online media is used as a supplement to traditional media, instead of a complement or displacement (Lin, 2002). Stafford, Stafford, and Schkade (2004) believe people choose the Internet as a medium because of the content found on the medium, the unique functions of the medium, and the social usefulness of the medium.

Studies have attempted to construct viable categories for the different ways people use the Internet. For Web usage, James, Wotring, and Forest (1995) determined surveillance, personal identity, information learning, socialization, escape, entertainment, and interaction were needs satisfied through the Internet. Kargaonkar and Wolin (1999) said social escapism, transaction, privacy, information, interaction, socialization, and economic motivations influenced Internet activity. Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) found motivations to use the Internet include interpersonal utility, pastime, information seeking, convenience, and entertainment. Rogers and Sheldon (2002) developed a Web
Motivation Inventory, noting that research, communication, surfing, and shopping were the four major motivations for Internet use. The eight Internet gratifications Charney and Greenberg (2001) discovered were diversion and entertainment, keeping informed, peer identity, good feelings, communication, sights and sounds, career, and “coolness.” Keeping informed and communication accounted for 36% of time spent weekly online. This last study supports the general consensus among research that one of the more popular reasons to use the Internet is information-seeking (Stafford and Stafford, 1998; Maignan and Lukas, 1997; Perry, Perry, and Hosack-Curlin, 1998; Eighmey, 1997; Korgaonkar and Wolin, 1999).

*How do people use it?*

People want to enjoy a unique experience when they are online (Todreas, 1999). As each person has different needs to fulfill, they will go about different ways to optimize their gratification attempts. This is demonstrated by the aforementioned lists of Internet gratifications.

There is a great variation in the extent to which Web users know the information they are searching for (Choo, Detlor, and Turnbull, 2000). In a 2008 study, Sun, Rubin, and Haridakis found men browse the Web more than women. Browsing is an indicator of information-seeking. They concluded people using the Internet for convenience or control used the Web for e-mail. Teo (2001) found women are more likely than men to use e-mail. Overall, men were more interested in using the Internet for learning, while women were more interested in using the Internet for communication.
Links and Navigation

When searching and navigating, users want an uncomplicated experience, especially with links. It is important to note the difference between a link and a hyperlink. A link is a reference on a Web page that references some other place on the same page or somewhere else on the Internet. If the link is clickable, it is considered a hyperlink (Infowest.com, 2010) A link can only be text, while a hyperlink can be text or a graphic (Ellis-Christensen, 2010).

An anchor link (a type of hyperlink) takes someone to another part of a long Web page and influences where people click. Users who visit a Web page for the first time select hyperlinks on the basis of the anchor links and the descriptions of the hyperlinks that are provided on the page (Hollink, van Someren, and Wielinga, 2009). People navigating unfamiliar sites during information searching choose hyperlinks based on the anchor links and the text surrounding the hyperlink (Grace-Farfaglia et al, 2006).

In order to satisfy users, sites must be easy to navigate, or be perceived as easy to navigate. A person’s perceived expected gratification is a strong predictor of online media service use (Lin, 2002), and expertise is a significant predictor of Web usage (Eastin and LaRose, 2000, Ferguson and Perse, 2000). The most important factor affecting a user’s beliefs of a Web site is the response time of the Web site. Speed leaves the impression of an easy to use site. Perceived ease has an “indirect impact on the user's intention to reuse a Web site” (Lin and Hsipeng, 2000, p. 205).
Internet users are seeking ways to make the Web easier to use by personalizing it to meet their demands. The ability of the Internet to serve this purpose sets it apart from other media. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the growth of social networking Web sites.

Social Networking Sites

A social networking Web site, or social network, is an online community of Internet users. A traditional social networking site has open membership, in which nearly any person can join. Other social networking sites are inclusive, permitting members of certain groups, classes, or other distinguishing factors to join (whatissocialnetworking.com, 2010). Social networking sites allow users to “create an individual Web page, post self-relevant information, link to other members, and interact with other members” (Buffardi and Campbell, 2008, p. 1303). Popular social networks include Facebook, Twitter, and MySpace. Three reasons social networks are appealing are that they build community, offer unique communication possibilities, and offer personalization (Buffardi and Campbell, 2008).

Social networks provide a sense of community that transcends anything offered by the mainstream media. People are getting their information from non-professional aggregators, friends, and social networks (Beckett, 2008). They send out links, videos, and emails to friends and social networks, and perpetuate online word-of-mouth marketing (Howard and Feldman, 2008).
Social networking sites change the way people communicate with each other. Social networks and blogs “transform the usual back-and-forth movement of a face to face conversation, where one must give way to others for a while if one is to enter into interaction with others” (Serfaty, 2004, p. 62).

Social networking Web sites allows users to personalize the Internet. Wunsch-Vincent and Vickery (2006) believe these sites are common sources of user-created content, which is published, publicly available, made with some creative effort, and outside of professional routines and practices. They also found people utilize this content for three reasons:

1) Consumption of content satisfies needs for information, entertainment, and mood management.

2) Interacting with content and other users enhances social connections and virtual communities.

3) Producing own content fulfills self-expression and self-actualization.

The reasons are not independent; two or three reasons can simultaneously explain a person’s use for user-created content (Shao, 2008). The relationship between the three reasons is detailed in Figure 1. A need for self-expression, information, entertainment, social interaction and others come into play when using social networking site. Each person might value one of those needs as more important than the next. One person might use Facebook in order to maintain social interaction. Another person might use MySpace as a site to express their personality. Social networks serve multiple purposes that people find appealing.
Hargittai (2007) found different social networking sites are more popular with some races than others. Although the study could not explicitly state why some races are attracted to one social networking site over another, they concluded that external factors (such as a student’s family life, their choice to live at home or on campus, and their parents’ education) could contribute to their social network preferences.

After exploring how and why people use social networking sites, the next section applies the research in this literature review to the social network at hand: Twitter.
Twitter

Given that Twitter was created in October 2006, there is a small body of research on its use and effects. The handful of meaningful studies conducted has examined what is Twitter, who uses it, the ways they use it, and why they use it.

What is Twitter?

The Internet site at the center of this research question is the microblog Twitter. By definition, microblogging is “a web service that allows a subscriber to broadcast short messages to other subscribers of the service” (Whatis.com, 2010). When subscribers want to add new content to their microblog, the process can be called “posting,” “sending,” or “updating.”

Messages on microblogs are often brief, and can be up to 140 to 200 characters. The immediacy and portability of these messages are appealing to users. It is immediate because updated messages are available to other subscribers in real time. It is portable because the content can be posted or read through a countless number of devices with Internet access, such as home PCs and cell phones (Whatis.com, 2010). A popular microblog in 2010 is Twitter, which enables subscribers (or users) “to post unlimited messages of 140 characters or less” (Clark, 2008, p. 5). Any updated message appears on the user’s Twitter Web page for other users or non-users to see (Clark, 2008). These messages are known as “tweets,” which can be transmitted by posting through Twitter.com or through a text message sent on a phone (Crunchbase, 2010). Some users can also send private messages to other Twitter users. In order to see tweets from other
people, a user must indicate that they are “following” another user. To “follow” is to indicate interest in what another person is tweeting. Tweets often include just text, but users are able to include a link or hyperlink with the text, which can take a user away from Twitter. Users can send a tweet to a specific person by including the receiver’s username with a “@” in front of the username. For example, to send a tweet to Barack Obama, a user would include the text “@BarackObama” in a tweet.

Who uses Twitter?

Quantcast, an Internet research company helping businesses target audiences online, studies Twitter demographics. The research primarily looked at Twitter users in the United States. In April 2010, it found 69% of Twitter users were Caucasian, 16% were African American, 11% were Hispanic, 3% were Asian, and 1% were designated as Other. Females made up 55% of Twitter users. The largest group of Twitter users by age was 18-34 year olds, at 45%. 35-49 year olds made up 24% of Twitter users (Quantcast, 2010).

According to Java et al. (2007), there are three main types of Twitter users: friends, information seeker, and information source. The most users are in the friend category, while the information seeker tends to be less active on Twitter, but follows others on a regular basis. The information source is active and has a large number of followers due to their “valuable” updates.
What are they doing with it?

Studies

In 2009, Pear Analytics investigated popular daily content on Twitter. It assigned tweets into one of six categories: news, spam, self-promotion, pointless babble, conversational, and pass-along value. From the Twitter accounts it followed, it discovered about 40% of the tweets was pointless babble, and 38% tweets were conversational. News tweets made up fewer than 4% of all tweets in the study.

Another study determined four main uses of Twitter: daily chatter, conversation, sharing information/URLs and reporting news. URLs (also known as links) appeared in about 13% of all posts found in the research. About one in every eight posts were in conversational form and used by 21% of users. The most common use of Twitter was to describe what people were doing, which fell into the “daily chatter” category. People were involved in certain social communities and they shared common interests, feelings, and experiences with each other (Java et al., 2007).

Findings in a 2009 study about Twitter provided results contrary to what the researchers were originally expecting. Johnson and Yang (2009) initially believed Twitter was mostly used for social purposes. After Twitter users completed a survey, the researchers found people primarily use Twitter for informational aspects. They determined that perhaps new Twitter users expect to satisfy social motives, but over time they are more motivated to seek out information through the social network. The results
also revealed a positive correlation between time spent on Twitter and gratifications sought for information.

Twitter helps cater to users seeking advice on certain product brands. A study conducted at Pennsylvania State University examined tweets made by and about 50 brands over a 13-week period. The researchers concluded people have brand opinions and choose to express it through microblogs like Twitter (Jansen et al., 2009).

Real use

When the media can’t dedicate time or space to an event, Twitter and other social networking sites fill the gap (Fraser and Dutta, 2008). In the small European country of Moldova, the Communist Party won a landslide reelection in 2009. Non-government organizations called for a rally, and protestors hit the streets. The media was absent from the protests, and authorities refused rally organizers access to microphones and speakers. Twitter and other Web sites helped spread pictures and videos of the rally, encouraging others to join the rally (Munglu-Pippidi and Munteanu, 2009).

Twitter allows people to conduct real-time blogging at conference proceedings and emergency events. Negotiations Bulletin is a news service on environmental negotiations, and it posted news updates on Twitter at a U.N. conference in Germany (Clark, 2009).

In times of crisis, Twitter acts as an anxiety-buffer. When the Mumbai attacks occurred in November 2008, witnesses tweeted what had unfolded. Some tweeted contact numbers to those worried about missing people; some tweeted to announce their safety
(Beaumont, 2008). In this instance, Twitter helps satisfy people’s need for safety by providing them with information.

When wildfires spread in southern California in October 2007, the San Diego Fire Department tweeted with the hashtag “#sandiegofire” during the fire recovery process. A hashtag is a word or term with a pound sign added in front of it, and is included in a tweet. People can search for this hashtag term in Twitter to see if others have used the same hashtag, thereby making it easier to search for identical content. People searching “#sandiegofire” were informed of incidents. More followers of this hashtag led to more active participation from emergency responders in disaster tweeting. Those tweets also act as a historical record of the event (Clark, 2009).

New Scientist magazine found Facebook, Twitter, and GoogleMaps responded more effectively to California wildfires than traditional emergency services. When an earthquake struck China in 2008, the first reports were from tweets. Bloggers picked up the tweets, which in turn found its way onto CNN. It elevated Twitter from a banal chat space to a bulletin board of relevant information. Social networking sites like Twitter can spontaneously mobilize people and motivate them into social action (Fraser and Dutta, 2008).

Twitter acts as a bridge between people and increases the flow of information, not only in media, but also in the classroom. Dunlap and Lowenthal (2009) studied an online course that experimented with the social networking site, encouraging, but not requiring students to join. The study noted the immediacy in which students heard back from instructors and other students while working on an assignment. Student notifications of
personal emergencies and other issues were delivered to instructors post haste. Twitter took the place of the classroom, creating a space in which a near real-time conversation could occur. This increased information processing and communication.

Why do they use Twitter?

Twitter acts as another forum through which people can communicate. Updating social network statuses lets networked friends know that they are there. It is “a form of status anxiety motivated by a compulsive need to feel constantly connected to our social environment” (Fraser and Dutta, 2008, p. 196). Even though some might consider updating a status a mundane action and devoid of meaning, people feel they gain existential significance relating their thoughts to others. Twitter makes them feel connected (Fraser and Dutta, 2008).

The popularity of social networking devices is the reflection of the growing use of phatic communication. Miller (2008) explained that phatic statements do not inform or exchange any meaningful information; its purpose is just to maintain connections or express sociability. People are increasingly finding ways to communicate socially but without any information or dialogic intents. In order to maintain the connections, people only have to respond or engage another person through a social networking site. People use social networking sites like Twitter merely to establish a relationship with other people simply through the delivery of a message, even if it is devoid of important content. This type of communication is largely motivated less by having something
particular to say as it is by the obligation to say “something,” just to let someone else know you are still “there” (p. 393).

Needs For Twitter

As described earlier, people have needs and are motivated to satisfy them. Twitter primarily acts as a device to satisfy the need for communication and information.

People who seek belonging turn to Twitter. Social networks act as an immediate social community in which one person can reach out to another. Twitter users can improve diminishing relationships by sending a Tweet to another person. A relationship can develop better by communicating through Twitter when both people are physically apart.

The ability to connect to others can affect personal self-esteem. Seeking gratification from others can boost personal self-image. However, users can also see what other people are tweeting about. Someone might tweet a message with the unintended consequence of emotionally hurting another person. For the most part, users should expect Twitter to maintain or improve self-esteem because their intent is typically to positively converse with peers, or perhaps interact with new ones.

Motivation and Twitter

Users have different needs and sometimes seek out Twitter to fulfill those needs. But what motivates people to choose Twitter? The arousal theory would suggest people using Twitter receive some sort of arousal. People may receive arousal through attention
from others or information gathered through Twitter. The incentive theory suggests people gain something of value from Twitter. They would make the effort to tweet with the intention of receiving a benefit.

The Self-Determination Theory supports the idea that people use Twitter to feel competent, autonomous, and socially related. Social networks act as a space in which these three needs are met. In the case of Twitter, tweets made by other users are public to others. People can feel competent by gathering information from the site and getting a better understanding of their world. Social networks provide great autonomy to users because it is personalized. People have control of the information they want to share and distribute with others. Twitter asks “What’s Happening?” to prompt the user to speak their mind (Twitter, 2010). Social networks also act as a forum for conversation in which online relationships are sustained. Real life personal relationships can be strengthened through online contact, increasing a person’s grasp of social relation.

**Conclusion**

This body of literature demonstrates the “flexibility” of motivation and media use. It is considered flexible because not every motivation can be ruled out as a possible explanation for media use. Any motivation can match up with any media outlet. For the most part, the inventories created present the most pronounced and typical reasons people are motivated to use a respective medium.

To emphasize this point, recognize the countless number of internal and external factors that interact to spark a motivation and lead to a selection of a media for
gratification. Some people might be autonomously motivated to use Twitter because it
gives them a sense of control when they personalize their Twitter page. They might be
under the influence of controlled motivation, and feel socially compelled to respond to a
tweet. Twitter could provide escapism, surveillance, entertainment, or any one of the
smorgasbord of motivations researchers have conceptualized.

For this study, it is concluded that the two key reasons people are motivated to use
Twitter is to communicate with others and obtain information. Therefore, it appears that
Rodgers and Sheldon’s Web Motivation Inventory (2002) most accurately describes the
four main reasons people use Twitter. The motivations are to communicate, to research,
to surf, and to shop. Their inventory is also valid and reliable. This inventory is employed
in this experiment to measure Twitter use. More accurately, it examines how Twitter
users are motivated to click the hyperlinks in tweets.

The interaction of people and hyperlinks is important to study because the Internet
is a highly interactive, connected environment. The hyperlinks people chose to click
reveal what they are interested in when navigating the Internet. By focusing on this
navigation in Twitter, it can be discovered what people are using Twitter for. An
experiment will help reveal any connection between motivation and Twitter use.
CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

After reviewing the literature, and exploring the major concepts of Twitter and hyperlinks, a number of research questions arose that data collection could provide for answers. Simply put, the first question was:

RQ1: What motivates people to use Twitter?

Using Rodgers and Sheldon’s Web Motivation Inventory, it was assumed there were four main reasons people use Twitter (research, communication, surf, and shop). The functional theory demonstrated that people are motivated to seek out specific media if it matches what they are looking for. This study looked to find if one Web Motivation Inventory motivation was activated more often than others, and would explore a connection between gratification sought and gratification obtained.

In addition to this gratification matching, it was worth investigating if the content of the tweets influenced people’s decision making.

RQ2: Which type of tweets catches users’ attention?

RQ3: What motivates Twitter users to click on hyperlinks in tweets?

RQ4: What motivates Twitter users to pass forward hyperlinks to other Twitter users?

Later in this section, it is explained how participants will gauge the value of different tweets. Here, a preference for a type of tweet over others revealed which tweets were
more popular. Popular hyperlinks in tweets would be clicked on more and tweeted more to other users.

Most importantly for this study, it was possible that the gratifications the users sought matched highly with the gratifications they obtain. Therefore:

RQ5: Is there a match between people’s intended motivational use of Twitter and the content they prefer?

After determining which motivations were strongest for each participant, it could be determined which motivation lead to a preference for a certain type of tweet. If the preferred type of tweet contained content corresponding to that motivation, then a match would occur. For example, if someone was motivated to use Twitter to find a deal on shoes, they would seek out tweets dealing with shopping for shoes. If they preferred that type of tweet compared to others, that would indicate a match. More broadly, someone motivated to shop on Twitter would prefer tweets with shopping content.

If a match did occur, it would be supported by Clary et al. (1998). These findings could further support the validity of the Web Motivation Inventory. Bridging off from these findings, hypotheses were formulated.

Hypotheses

In line with the functionalist theory, the better the situational opportunity, the more likely the motivation would be fulfilled. For this study, there were different tweets that provided an opportunity for matching up with a motivation. Four items created by
the researcher measured people’s perceptions of tweets. Those four items were interest, worth, participation, and pass-along value.

H1: Participants will deem a tweet as interesting if the content matches their main Internet motivation.

H2: Participants will deem a tweet as having worth if the content matches their main Internet motivation.

H3: Participants will participate with a tweet if the content matches their main Internet motivation.

H4: Participants will deem a tweet as having pass-along value if the content matches their main Internet motivation.

H5: Participants are more likely to click on a tweet that matches their main Internet motive than any other tweet.

The justification for creating these items is explained later in the Data Collection section.

Since Twitter is a social networking site, it was naturally assumed people use it to connect with others. It’s another forum through which people can communicate, especially since people have a need to feel socially connected to others (Fraser and Dutta, 2008). A study on Facebook and MySpace found that more than 90% of people use the site to connect with new and old friends (Raacke and Bonds-Raacke, 2008). Based on the extensive research concluding that people like to communicate with other people, the next hypotheses suggested people preferred tweets from other people, and not businesses and organizations.
H6: Tweets will be deemed as more interesting when it comes from a person than an organization.

H7: Tweets will be deemed as having more worth when it comes from a person than an organization.

H8: Participants will participate with tweets more when it comes from a person than an organization.

H9: Tweets will be deemed as having more pass-along value when it comes from a person than an organization.

Data Collection

A controlled experiment conducted by the researcher explored how Twitter users’ motivation to click on a hyperlink in a tweet was influenced by three factors: (1) the content of the tweet, (2) the presenter of the tweet, and (3) the match of motivation to content preference. Participants in this experiment answered questions about their demographics and then completed the Web Motivation Inventory. Then, they saw 12 tweets and answered six questions for each tweet. These questions were rated on a Likert-type scale. Each tweet the participants read represented one of the four reasons people use the Internet according to Rogers and Sheldon’s Web Motivation Inventory: to research, to communicate, to surf, and to shop. This experiment was conducted online through surveymonkey.com, and was accessed through Twitter.
Participants

Participants were recruited through a “snowball effort” on Twitter. In March 2010, a “Twestival” was held in a Midwestern city. A Twestival brings Twitter users together from a local geographical area to meet face-to-face. At this particular Twestival, 20 Twitter users provided their contact information to the researcher. The 20 people received a link to the survey through Twitter. The 20 people were asked to participate in the experiment, and tweet to other users the link to this experiment. Their pass-along activity helped spread the word about this experiment. This method of data collection highly ensured all participants had a current Twitter account in their name.

A total of 153 respondents participated in the survey. There were 75 participants who saw tweets from a person, and 70 of them completed the entire survey. There were 78 who saw tweets from an organization, and 70 of them completed the entire survey.

Participant ages ranged from 18 to 66. The average age of the participants was 32.4. The gender distribution was 87 males (56.9%) and 64 females (41.8%); two people did not indicate their gender. The participants were mostly Caucasian (116, 75.8%). A total of 12 people indicated they were Hispanic (7.8%), 8 as African-American (5.2%), 10 as Asian (6.5%), and 7 as “other” (4.6%).

Design

A mixed design was utilized with a 4 (tweet content) x 2 (tweet presenter). Tweet content was a within-subjects variable, with all participants seeing the same content for all 12 tweets. There were 12 tweets because participants looked at three tweets from each
of the four Web Motivation Inventory categories. That is, three tweets were categorized as surfing tweets, three tweets were categorized as shopping tweets, three were categorized as research, and three as communication.

To detail further, shopping tweets contained content regarding a sale or deal a business was providing. For example:

“Jane W - Spend $25 or more on accessories or handbag, get free jewelry box. http://ow.ly/1tEYH”

The tweet refers to a special offer a shopper could use.

Surfing tweets were about content that could be found on only the Internet about other Web sites. An example:

“Mary B - Play your way around the web with Google Reader Play http://bit.ly/bg6PJG”

Google Reader is a Web-only tool. The link would let the user venture to another Web site to gain more information about the Internet.

Research tweets included general news or information:


These tweets provide information on a specific topic. They can occasionally look like a newspaper headline:

Finally, communication tweets tend to be informal or pointless babble:

“Frank L - http://twitpic.com/1b6j51 - Sketch townie bar in Bethlehem, PA with @mary and friends.”

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In this experiment, communication tweets are meant to duplicate the casual process of the user updating his or her status. These tweets are often harder to define because they often lack informative or meaningful content.

As shown in these tweet examples, the tweets contained text, the source of the tweet (who sent the tweet), and a hyperlink. The text indicated the content that the hyperlinks would lead to, as well as who made the tweet. After reading a tweet, the participants answered six questions. The participants answered these questions using a Likert Scale, which ranged from 1 to 7.

Numerous studies have been conducted to determine which numerical Likert scale produces the most accurate and reliable data. Dawes (2008) found no mean difference between a 5- and 7-point Likert scale, but did find a difference between a 5- and 10-point Likert scale. Cox (1980) determined that there is no optimal numerical scale appropriate under all circumstances. Therefore, using either a 5-or 7-point scale would be acceptable for this study. The researcher selected a 7-point scale for this experiment to more accurately value participant responses.

The tweet presenter and matching motivations were between-subjects variables. The two levels of tweet presenter were: (1) the tweet comes from a single person, or (2) the tweet comes from an organization. For this experiment, fictional names and organizations were created to help eliminate biases participants would have about companies with Twitter accounts. For matching motivations, the preferred tweets either did or did not match up with a participant’s main motivation to use the Web, as measured in the WMI questionnaire.
As the uses and gratifications theory established, people use media for various independent reasons. Having a between- and within-factor provided an opportunity to see the different ways participants responded to similar and different stimuli.

**Independent Measures**

The first independent variable was the content of the tweets. As indicated before, the different types of tweets related to the four categories of the Web Motivational Inventory. Participants saw all twelve tweets; there were no duplicate tweets. The content was not altered between the groups; each group saw the same content word for word.

The second independent variable was the role of the tweet creator. It was manipulated by having one group look at messages tweeted by a person, while the other group looked at tweets made by an organization. The chosen usernames were generic, randomly created names of organizations that did not exist, such as “ComputerTown,” “NewsMediaOne,” and “InternetInvestigator.” The names were also loosely tied to the content. For example, “InternetInvestigator” appeared with a surfing tweet to simulate content matching an expected source.

**Dependent Measures**

There were four dependent variables, or items: interest, worth, participation, and pass-along value. Interest was measured through how the participants gauged the tweets as interesting and entertaining. Worth was measured through how important and useful were the tweets. Participation was measured by the likelihood of clicking the hyperlink.
Pass-along value was measured by the likelihood of retweeting the hyperlink. These four items were created by the researcher for this study, they did not exist beforehand.

**Procedure**

The experiment consisted of three main parts: a survey of demographics questions, the Web Motivation Inventory, and an exposure to tweets with corresponding questions. The experiment was conducted through surveymonkey.com, which was a Web site allowing users to create surveys accessible to other Internet users.

Before the experiment began, the participants gave their consent to participate in the experiment. Then, they saw a page explaining briefly what to expect in the experiment. The entire consent page is in Appendix 1. After giving consent, they began answering questions.

*Part One – Demographics*

Participants were asked general demographic questions such as age and sex. They also indicated how often they use Twitter on a weekly basis (see Appendix 2). All three questions appeared on the same page.

*Part Two – Web Motivation Inventory*

The Web Motivation Inventory assessed the way people use the Internet through four categories: research, communication, surfing, and shopping. A total of 12 statements were presented reflective of the four WMI motivations. For example, “I use Twitter to
connect with my friends” measured the communication motivation. With each statement, the participants gauged their agreeability on a 7-point Likert Scale (see Appendix 3 for the statements). All 12 statements appeared on the same page. The inventory results were compared to the scores provided in Part Three of the experiment.

Part Three – Tweet Exposure

Participants looked at 12 tweets; three related to research, three related to communication, three related to surfing, and three related to shopping. They only saw one tweet at a time. The page they looked at was not identical to what they would see on Twitter. Since many graphics and icons were removed, they only saw the content of the tweet and who made the tweet. This emphasized the influence the content and presenter had on the Twitter user.

The order of the tweets was randomized, rather than looking at three tweets from one Web Motivation Inventory motive back-to-back (see Appendix 4 for the order). Every person saw all 12 tweets in the same order. This reduced the unmeasured influence of tweet order on motivation. After looking at each tweet, the participants answered six questions about their interaction with the tweet. The six questions related to the four items (interest, worth, participation, and pass-along value). This provided a measure of how the participants would use the link in Twitter (see Appendix 5 for the questions). Once all 12 tweets were reviewed, the participants saw a page indicating that the experiment was complete. Here, they were asked to provide their email address if they want to be entered into a drawing for a $25 gift card. Two participants were contacted
after the data collection process ended, and discussed with the researcher as to how they would receive their gift cards (see Appendix 6).

**Item Reliability**

Once the data were collected, a factor analysis was conducted on the WMI and the four DV items.

A principal component analysis for the four indexes in Rodgers and Sheldon’s Web Motivation Inventory (surf, shop, research, and communicate) was completed in which one component was extracted for each index. Each component had an Eigenvalue greater than one. A reliability analysis to test for internal consistency for each index was completed after the factor analysis, in which the Cronbach’s Alpha was interpreted and found as reliable for three indexes if the value was greater than .7. The communicate index was not found as reliable. See Table 1 for each the reliability of each index.

Table 1

*Reliability of the WMI Motives*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Index</th>
<th>α</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shop</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surf</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A factor analysis of all of the dependent measure items the items (interest, worth, participate, and pass-along value) was calculated. One component was extracted for all
four indexes (Eigenvalue = 5.024). Thus, we averaged the new items in to a new construct named satisfaction. Alpha was 0.96 for this new construct.

All 12 items loaded cleanly into separate factors. There was no cross loading of the items. The items for the shopping factor loaded cleanly with a minimum of 0.91. No other items cross loaded on this factor, with the next highest item loading no greater than 0.29. The research items loaded cleanly, with a minimum of 0.75. The next highest item loaded at 0.38. The surfing items loaded with a minimum of 0.76, the next highest item loaded at 0.21. Finally, the communication items loaded cleanly with a minimum of 0.65, with the next highest item loading at 0.18. These data are in Table 2.

Table 2

Rotated Principal Components Solution for Web Motivation Inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Index</th>
<th>Rotated Component</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buy Things</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Products</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surf</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web Pages</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need Info</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need Know</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connect</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 4 – RESULTS

Before presenting the results, the hypotheses are restated to reflect the lone dependent variable that was determined after a factor analysis of the original four dependent variables.

H1: Participants will be satisfied with a tweet if the content matches an Internet motivation.

H2: Participants will be more satisfied with a tweet if it comes from a person than an organization.

Hypothesis 1 predicted motivation would associate with satisfaction for the corresponding tweet. Hypothesis 2 considered whether or not there was more overall satisfaction with tweets depending on the tweet source (person or organization).

Data Results

A factor analysis, a reliability test, a MANOVA, and four regressions were computed. The first two were utilized and explained in the Methods section of this thesis.

Hypothesis 1 suggested if there was a match between people’s Internet motivation and the presented tweet, then they would like the tweet better. According to Rodgers and Sheldon’s Web Motivation Inventory, the four Internet motivations are surfing, shopping, communicating, and researching. Four regressions were computed calculating the relationship between answers to the WMI Questionnaire and satisfaction of tweets. The
calculations primarily concerned a significant “match” between responses for one motivation in the WMI Questionnaire and the tweets containing content corresponding to that same motivation. Each WMI motive was compared to the four tweet types to explore the difference between a match and a non-match.

Each tweet liking score was regressed on the four motives, expecting the motive corresponding to the tweet to be a significant predictor. See Table 3 for the results.

Hypothesis 1 was supported in three of four tests. There was a match for the people who were motivated to surf, research, or shop, but not for people who were motivated to communicate.

A regression showed that the motivation to surf significantly predicted the satisfaction of surfing tweets ($\beta=0.22, p<0.05$). Another regression showed that the motivation to research significantly predicted the satisfaction of surfing tweets ($\beta=0.27, p<0.05$) There was also a regression that showed the motivation to research significantly predicted the satisfaction of research tweets ($\beta=0.26, p<0.01$). A regression showed the motivation to communicate significantly predicted satisfaction of research tweets ($\beta=0.26, p<0.05$). Finally, a regression showed the motivation to shop predicted satisfaction of shopping tweets ($\beta=0.25, p<0.05$). However, a regression showed the motivation to communicate did not predict satisfaction of communication tweets ($\beta=-0.04, p=0.66$).
Table 3

*Hierarchical Regressions Between Tweet Type and WMI Motive*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tweet Type</th>
<th>WMI Motives</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>R Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surf</td>
<td>Surf</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.01*</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.00**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shop</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Research</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.04*</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Surf</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>-0.35</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shop</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Surf</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shop</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.01**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop</td>
<td>Shop</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.02*</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Surf</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05  
**p < .01

Hypothesis 2 suggested the source of the tweet influences people’s judgments of the content of the tweet. The researcher conducted a 2 (source: people, organization) x 4 (tweet type: surf, shop, research, communicate) MANOVA with repeated measures on the second factor. Satisfaction scores were transformed to enhance normality by squaring each score. Tweet source was a between subjects-factor. One group of participants looked at tweets from a person; the other group looked at tweets from an organization.
This test did not examine the role of motivation. It simply looked at participants’ satisfaction with tweets based on two external factors: tweet type and tweet source. Satisfaction scores were measured on a 7-point Likert scale. Table Three shows the mean scores provided for each type of tweet in each group.

There was a significant main effect for satisfaction of a type of tweet based on content (Wilks Lambda=0.42, F(3, 147)=67.63, p<0.01). These results showed participants were most satisfied with surfing tweets than any other type of tweet (m=3.51). These data are in Table 4.

Table 4

*Mean Answers to Tweets Based on Group*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Tweet</th>
<th>People Group</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Organization Group</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surf</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>3.51&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>3.27&lt;sup&gt;ab&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>2.25&lt;sup&gt;abc&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>2.85&lt;sup&gt;abc&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Shared subscripts (<sup>a,b,c</sup>) are significantly different (p<0.01)

There was also a significant interaction between type of tweet and tweet source (F(3, 447)=3.53, p<0.05). See Figure 2 for the results. People were satisfied with surfing tweets more when it came from people rather than organizations. However, they were more satisfied with research tweets when it came from organizations that people. There was virtually no difference in satisfaction of shopping and communication tweets.
Figure 2

*Differences of Satisfaction of Tweet Types Based on Tweet Groups*

![Graph showing differences in satisfaction of tweet types based on tweet groups]

- **Squared Mean Satisfaction Score of Tweets**
  - Y-axis: Squared Mean Satisfaction Score of Tweets
  - X-axis: Tweet Type
  - Lines:
    - Blue: People
    - Red: Organizations

*Note: The graph visually represents the differences in satisfaction levels for different tweet types (Shop, Surf, Communicate, Research) between people and organizations.*
CHAPTER 5 – ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

The results from this experiment could not discover if a main motivation led to preference for a specific tweet. As mentioned in the results section, the WMI does not measure a main motivation. It merely measures the individual values of the four motivations.

Hypothesis 1 Analysis: Motivation Match

Despite the change in Hypothesis 1, there still was a notable match between Internet motivation and satisfaction with a tweet. This was true when people’s motivation was to surf, research, or shop. However, this was not the case when people were motivated to communicate.

**Surf**

The motivation to surf led to a satisfaction of surfing tweets. Rodgers and Sheldon (2002) defined surfing as exploration. To clarify, surfing is an aimless, online time-passing activity with no specific goal in mind. What is important about surfers is that they are navigating through only Web sites. Since their activity is solely Internet-based, the surfing tweets in this experiment contained content that could only be found online. One example of a surfing tweet in this experiment:

“Did you know Twitter and Facebook are the new target of cybercriminals? Check out these tips to protect yourself: http://bit.ly/cOAQED”
These tweets have information that would only apply to Web sites and not about activities or information you could find offline. Surfers are inherently interested in navigating other sites and applications of the Internet. These surf tweets were appealing because it involved Web-only content. Therefore, surfers would be interested in surf tweets because it connects them to other elements found only online.

Surfers did not match with research tweets because it typically did not contain Web-only content. An example of a research tweet:


A surfer would not feel satisfied with this tweet because it would not enhance their ability to experience a different or thought-provoking part of the Internet. There is information to gain (specifically greater knowledge of a topic), but not necessarily information that would improve their ability to seek out more fascinating Web tools.

Shopping tweets did not match surfers because the content of shopping tweets were to the point. The shop tweets in the experiment included all necessary information about a deal a business was offering. If that deal was appealing, the user would know what information would appear after clicking the hyperlink. Surfers leave Twitter to get more information about to improve their Web exploration, not read more what they already know.

Participants who provided high scores for surfing in the WMI questionnaire might be disinterested in communicating with other Twitter users. As Johnson and Yang (2009) found, more experienced Twitter users prefer spending time with the social networking
site to surf and gather information. Early users enjoy Twitter for communication. This WMI experiment did not ask how long the participants have been on Twitter. If Johnson and Yang’s assumption was correct, it could be believed that the participants in this experiment were experienced users, given that surfers were not interested in communication tweets.

Research

Rogers and Sheldon (2008) defined the motivation to research as an intentional activity which concludes once the right information has been attained. The match between the motivation to research and research tweets appears logical because they were certainly interested in tweets the offered informative, meaningful content worth learning. They will found the tweets that specifically match what they are looking for. Java et al. (2007) found “information seeker” was one of the three titles given to Twitter users (friends and information source were the other two). That research, coupled with this experiment, reveals people are on Twitter for more reasons that just to socialize. This is especially true when the user is motivated to seek information.

A unique match in this experiment was between the motivation to research and satisfaction of surfing tweets. Why would surfers be dissatisfied with research tweets, but researchers satisfied with surfing tweet? As explored before, surfing tweets were specifically Web-based, while research tweets contained generic information. A researcher may still be interested in surfing tweets because the content performs a dual role as a source of navigation and information. A surfing tweet provides knowledge on
how to improve the Web experience. Perhaps the researcher intentionally seeks out new ways to experience the Web. Their motivation is purposeful searching, as opposed to the surfers’ aimless navigation.

People motivated to research were not interested in shopping because there was no new meaningful knowledge to obtain. Shopping deals are often temporary and offer little long term intellectual value. The same reason explains why researchers were not satisfied with communication tweets: little informational or important value to gain from reading the tweets.

Shop

Twitter users looking for deals take advantage of word-of-mouth mentions from other Twitter users, as well as specials tweeted by businesses. Similar to the motivation to research, this is a purposeful activity. People’s motivation to shop will highly match a preference for shop tweets because it is a specific type of tweet. Surfing, research, and communication tweets are distinctly different from shopping tweets because they do not provide information about sales or products available for purchase. This narrow focus for a particular type of tweet lends itself to a significant match between motivation and tweet type.

Communication

This was one of the more surprising results from the data collection. There was no match between the motivation to communicate and communication tweets. It was
surprising given that Twitter was believed to provide an excellent setting for reaching out to peers. This was not the case in this experiment. The literature review discussed how people use Twitter to communicate with others and their world. There are two possible explanations as to why participants’ motivation did not match the corresponding tweets, especially for participants in the People group.

Source

All of the names of the Twitter users in the sample tweets in the People group were fictional and generic (Mary B., John S., etc.). The participants had no emotional connection to these names. They were also not prompted to consider these people as friends or acquaintances. There was no trust with the people who made these Tweets. A strong match between motivation and tweet could have occurred if the tweet source was the name of a friend or someone the participants followed on Twitter. Since this was not the case, participants may have been inclined to ignore the tweets since it came from an unfamiliar person. This disconnect from the tweet source could also explain why tweets from organizations would have led to no match. The organizations were fictional, eliminating any emotional connection between the participant and the organization.

Content

The communication tweets were non-informative in nature and were meant to duplicate people sharing personal content. However, the communication tweets might not have been clearly distinctive from the other tweets, resulting in no match. Finally, it is
possible the participants may have been motivated to communicate but did not find a tweet that satisfied that motivation.

Importance of Mismatch

This is perhaps the most important findings in the experiment. Users chose not to communicate with people or organizations that they were not familiar with. However, users were willing to get shopping information from unfamiliar sources. What can be concluded from this is that users will only interact with people they know on Twitter. They will converse and communicate with familiar people. They are willing to read tweets from unknown sources to get information that help them make purchases, find sales, etc.

Hypothesis 2 Analysis: Importance of Tweet Source

It was originally hypothesized that people would be more satisfied with tweets when coming from people rather than organizations. In two of four cases, satisfaction of tweets changed depending on the source of the tweet.

Twitter users were more satisfied with surfing tweets from people. The search for cool Web tools may become easier when peers suggest places to explore. If an organization suggests a Web site, Twitter users may believe the organization has an agenda in mind. The organization is merely seeking more visitors of its Web site to increase its traffic. If a person suggests checking out a Web site, the Twitter user will understand the person had a positive experience with the site. It is a word-of-mouth
process. This word-of-mouth phenomenon is supported by Howard and Feldman (2008) and Jansen et al (2009). They determined people use Twitter for positive word-of-mouth mentions.

Research tweets were preferred when they came from an organization. During the Hypothesis 1 analysis, it was discussed that research tweets provided generic informational content. There could be a greater sense of authentication and authority of these types of tweets when coming from an organization. Again, a professional organization might have an agenda, but the information they provide might be more reliable and less scrutinized than if it came from the average person. Much like a student gathering research for an extensive class assignment, they would prefer getting information from a trusted source, rather than a peer.

To conclude the difference between surfing and research tweets, surfers want to improve their Web experience with the help of their friends, but want more information on non-Web topics from organizations.

Satisfaction of shopping and communicate tweets did not vary as function of tweet source. When it comes to saving money, Twitter users were more likely willing to take anyone’s advice on finding a good deal. The dissatisfaction with communication tweets was explored in the Hypothesis 1 analysis. Disinterest in the content and the generic names of people and organizations were reasons for little difference in satisfaction scores for communication tweets.
Most Preferred Content

As shown in Table Three in the results section, all participants provided the highest scores for surfing tweets. It appeared participants were satisfied with these tweets more than other tweets. This reveals that people use Twitter for reasons beyond socializing and communicating with peers. They are using it to collect information and make better sense of their world.

Choosing Twitter as a way to surf and find information is supported by Stafford, Stafford, and Schkade. They believe people choose the Internet as a medium because of the content found on the medium, the unique functions of the medium, and the social usefulness of the medium (2004). Twitter is an ideal place for surfers because of the variety and number of Tweets a user can see on one page. Twitter is an endless buffet of different content that users can pick and choose from.

Teo (2001) said men use the Internet primarily to gather information; women use it more for communication. This conclusion might support the higher scores for surfing tweets in this experiment because almost 57% of the participants were men.

Despite these results, one discrepancy came to light after the data was collected. The survey did not tell the participants that all of the tweets they would read were from a person or an organization. Participants saw the name of the tweet source, the tweet content, and the hyperlink on each page. They were not asked to recognize the name of the tweet source, nor were they asked later if they noticed the tweets were from a person or an organization. It is possible that participants subconsciously noticed who sent the tweets. Their instincts of recognizing if the tweets came from a person or organization
could have a small impact on the data. If a future study would further examine the importance of tweet source on users, it is imperative the researchers ask the participants if they noticed who was tweeting. In addition, there were other flaws with the experiment.

**Design Concerns**

*Testing*

As discussed in the literature review there are many different motivations at play when selecting a media to fulfill a need. Although the Web Motivational Inventory was valid and reliable, perhaps four motivations were simply too few to ascribe to Twitter user. The inventory was also not meant to measure a sole main motivation. For future studies exploring Twitter and motivation, perhaps a broader scale of uses and/or needs could be utilized.

*Appearance*

The lack of a simulated Twitter page may have resulted in unmeasured influences on people’s scores.

Typically, Twitter users have an icon next to their Twitter name that includes a picture of themselves or something else. First time users are given a generic icon typically of a bird (one of Twitter’s trademarks). More experienced Twitter users would recognize if a profile has that bird as their icon. It is a sign of a new user, or a dubious organization. Spamming organizations with generic Twitter names sometimes leave the icon unchanged since it is a computerized account. Even though the lack of an image in
this experiment did not alter the content, its presence could have changed their interaction with the tweet and hyperlink. Future experiments ought to include this icon to make a more complete simulation of Twitter.

The organization names were gender-neutral, while the names of the people were not. An unexplained factor is the role of the source’s gender. It is possible people would generally find one type of tweet as having more worth or pass along value if it came from women than men.

Bit.ly is a Web site commonly used to make long links shorter. In this experiment, Bit.ly appeared in a number of links in this study, but not all. This experiment does not measure the difference of one truncating Web site (like Bit.lyl) versus others (like ow.ly or TinyURL) (Kirkpatrick, 2010). The difference might not be significant at all, but it is certainly a factor to consider in future Twitter experiments.

Other Issues

Since it was difficult to duplicate people’s natural use of Twitter, this experiment attempted to accurately mimic their behavior. This study could not generalize results from the people in this study to similar people who did not participate in the study (Creswell, 2009). At this time, there may be no immediate remedy but perhaps repeating the experiment at a later time with the same design.

There were a limited number of participants for this study since non-Twitter users were not studied. Therefore, it was difficult to generalize the narrow findings to a larger population, especially to people who did not share the characteristics of the people in the
study (Creswell, 2009). Also, the results did not apply to those do not have Twitter accounts.

**Research Questions Answered**

*RQ1: What motivates people to use Twitter?*

Although it would prove difficult to explain every motivation, it can be determined that every person is motivated in their own way to use media such as Twitter. Participants indicated their agreeability to the statements in the Twitter Questionnaire. Since their answers scored high and low on the Likert Scale, it demonstrates the variety and strength of different reasons to use Twitter.

The WMI Questionnaire did not reveal one main motivation as significantly more prevalent than the others. Studies provided in the literature review emphasized the use of Twitter to communicate and socialize with others. In order for this experiment to reinforce that claim, the communicate motive of the WMI would have required higher scores than its counterparts. Still, a low score for the shop motivation does not mean a person will never be motivated to use Twitter to purchase a product. It merely indicates they will have an infrequent shopping behavior on Twitter.

This experiment could not prove the exact motivations driving people to use Twitter. It is concluded that the four WMI motivations are some reasons why people use Twitter, but not all. The force behind that reason is left unexplained.

*RQ2: Which type of tweets catches users’ attention?*
Hypothesis 2 showed that surfing tweets earned the highest satisfaction scores from participants. Research tweets were the second most popular, followed by communication tweets, and then shopping tweets. Based on the satisfaction scores, it appears surfing tweets catch the attention of Twitter users more than others. These were the tweets that took Twitter users to other pages with content about other Internet elements. This is a result of people primarily using Twitter to navigate through the Web.

**RQ3:** What motivates Twitter users to click on hyperlinks in tweets?

**RQ4:** What motivates Twitter users to pass forward links to other Twitter users?

The findings do not lend to determining what created the motivation in people. Since this was not a qualitative experiment, no responses were collected that explains motivating use to click or retweeting links. Statistical tests did not reveal any type of tweet as being specifically more likely to be clicked or retweeted. The results can only show that surf tweets were the most satisfying.

**RQ5:** Is there a match between people’s intended motivational use of Twitter and the content they prefer?

There was a match for surfing, research, and shopping tweets. There was no match for communication tweets. People who were motivated to surf were also interested in research tweets. The matching theory of functionalism justified this match. As Clary et al. (1998) found, people seek out volunteer activities that matched a need they want to satisfy. In the case of Twitter, people would match a tweet type with a need they wanted satisfied.
The experiment asked participants to provide demographical information. Their gender, race, and age were compared to the responses. There were no significant relationships between these three items and their use of Twitter.

**Validation of Study for Journalists**

The findings of the study are important for businesses and organizations seeking a closer connection with consumers on Twitter. Journalistically, news outlets have Twitter accounts to disseminate the latest updates and breaking news. In addition, these outlets seek participation from Twitter users to provide assistance in covering news. The goal is to improve news coverage and develop a closer social media relationship with the audience.

The results of this experiment may change news outlets’ expectations of audience engagement on Twitter. News outlets create tweets with questions, in hopes of getting feedback. Based on our results, it is postulated that people aren’t motivated to provide an answer to a question, or provide any feedback, because people don’t prefer to communicate with people they don’t know. While they may be familiar with the news outlet, they pass on the opportunity to reply because they have no emotional connection to the outlet. There is no emotional benefit to responding to tweets made by a news source.

However, news outlets can expect people to read information provided in tweets. The experiment results showed people were willing to read informational tweets from both people and organizations. What this demonstrates is the likelihood of people
observing tweets from news outlets. The tweets made by news outlets have value to people interested in getting news or information. News outlets can expect people will read their Twitter updates, but not expect people to always respond back. This validates a news outlet’s presence on Twitter if the outlet values its passive Twitter audience.

**Justification for Future Studies**

An important note is that this research explored how people use Twitter based on what other people have already tweeted. This study did not examine how people actually tweet, if they prefer to have links in their tweets or not, or the way in which they access Twitter. The research questions in this thesis might be better answered if they the perspective of what people provide in their own tweets and not their responses to other tweets. Reasons include reaching out to others, participating in Miller’s “phatic communication” (2008), or acting as an information source (Java et al. 2007).

A recent development during the completion of this thesis is the emergence of the Tweet Button (Tweet Button, 2010). It is an icon that can be placed anywhere on Web site. If a user is simultaneously connected to Twitter, he or she can click the button and a hyperlink to that Web site appears in a new tweet. The user can add extra text describing the hyperlink’s content. This icon creates an easier opportunity to share links with others through Tweets. In relation to this thesis, it could be explored whether or not hyperlinks connected through the Tweet Button are more trustworthy, interesting, reliable, etc. Tools like the Tweet Button present a challenge to researchers because they are created faster
than studies can be completed. The advancement of Web sites and applications on the Internet provide a breeding ground of new areas of study, if researchers are up to the task.

Twitter’s popularity continues to rise through the new decade. In July 2010, there were 190 million users on Twitter (Schonfeld, 2010). In only three months before, that number was at 100 million (Economic Times, 2010). Such a growth provides justification for studying the social networking device, as well as proof that Twitter isn’t dying out just yet. There are plenty of opportunities to further explore the value of Twitter in people’s lives. Twitter’s role as a social and informational device provides two different fields of study worth exploring. Commercial businesses will always make use of studies on social networks because it further taps into Internet habits of consumers. Future studies should take note of the flaws in this experiment to minimize gaps in data collection.

**Conclusion**

People’s motivation to use Twitter is most likely not limited to the four that make up the WMI. As mentioned in the literature review, reasons for using social networking devices are numerous. This experiment showed people with surfing, research, or shopping motives choose Twitter to satisfy their needs because they find content that matches what they are looking for. Although this thesis did not find a match to the communication motive, it takes into consideration a flaw in the experiment design that led to a non-match. Despite a non-match, the research does suggest users may communicate only with people they know on Twitter. They will read tweets from
unknown sources only to surf, shop, or research. It is also certain that other motivations to use Twitter beyond the WMI do exist and are applicable to Twitter use.

The source of the tweet does alter people’s satisfaction of tweets. Twitter users prefer surfing tweets when it comes from a person than from an organization. However, they prefer research tweets when it comes from an organization than from a person. Tweet source provides no difference for research or communication tweets.

Factors such as experience and tastes influence use of Twitter. Johnson and Yang (2009) found people primarily use Twitter for informational seeking/gathering. They concluded new users join Twitter for social purposes, but as they become more experienced, they use it for informational purposes. This discovery suggests people’s motivation of using Twitter is not only influenced by the content, but their experience as well. Unfortunately, this experiment could not conclude if experience was a factor in Twitter use. However, Johnson and Yang’s results determine that differing factors such as experience, or amount of activity, partially explain people’s diverse motivational use of Twitter.

There are a myriad of reasons people turn to media to satisfy a need (as mentioned in the uses and gratifications theory). Rarely is there one single motivation driving a person to act. Researchers also struggle to find a perfect number of specific needs and motivations explaining the use of a singular media; this experiment is no different. Within social and informational reasons, there are several other motivations that make up those reasons. Socializing in order to maintain friendship, to find new
friends, or to feel connected are just a few motivations. This experiment does not reveal any new underlying motivations.

People are motivated to use Twitter because they can find content that matches a need they want satisfied. Based on this experiment, they find surfing, researching, and shopping content on Twitter as satisfying. This study reveals that people use media tools like social networks for more than socializing and communication. This further demonstrates the validity of the uses and gratifications theory. It is concluded that Twitter serves a variety of purposes to cater to people’s needs.
Bibliography


APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1

Consent Form

You have been invited to participate in a research study conducted by a candidate for the Masters of Arts in Journalism at the University of Missouri-Columbia. The aim of this study is to understand what motivates you to use Twitter. The results from this study will contribute to the completion of a master’s thesis paper.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete an online survey. The entire study should take approximately 20 minutes. Your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time.

The data from this study will be kept confidential. Your participation is anonymous and all data you provide will not be connected to you in any way.

The principal researcher conducting this study is Michael Brannen. If you have any questions, you may contact him at mcb7cf@mizzou.edu or by phone at 573-881-5696.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), contact the University of Missouri-Columbia Campus Institutional Review Board located in 483 McReynolds Hall, phone number (573) 882-9585.

By clicking yes, you confirm that you are at least 18 years and consent to participate in this study.
APPENDIX 2
Demographics Questions

Please answer the following questions about you.

1) What is your age in years? __________
2) What item best describes you?   Female  Male
3) What item below best describes you?
   African-American  Asian  Caucasian  Hispanic  Other
4) How often during the week do you tweet?
   Less than once a week  Once a week  3-4 times a week  Every day
   More than 10 times a week  More than twice a day
APPENDIX 3
Twitter Questionnaire

Please rate the agreeability of each statement based on your current use of Twitter.

Measured on a scale of 1-7
1=Strongly Disagree
2=Mostly Disagree
3=Somewhat Disagree
4=Neutral
5=Somewhat Agree
6=Mostly Disagree
7=Strongly Disagree

1. I use Twitter to make a purchase.
2. I use Twitter to buy things.
3. I use Twitter to purchase a product I’ve heard about.
4. I use Twitter to explore new sites
5. I use Twitter to surf for fun.
6. I use Twitter to find interesting Web pages.
7. I use Twitter to do research.
8. I use Twitter to get information I need.
9. I use Twitter to find out things I need to know.
10. I use Twitter to e-mail other people.
11. I use Twitter to connect with my friends.
12. I use Twitter to communicate with others.
APPENDIX 4
Order of Tweets

Please read the tweet and rate your agreeability with the statements below.

Person Group
John S - So, do people actually like the iPad? http://bit.ly/bbJtAt
Alex A - Save time in the kitchen with the Geroge Foreman grill or Kenmore Toaster oven, your choice only $39.99 ea save $10-$20 http://bit.ly/8Xe1jU
Mary B - Play your way around the web with Google Reader Play http://bit.ly/bg6PJG
Sara D - Brain scans may reveal early Alzheimer’s http://bit.ly/c5NYXG
Jane W - Spend $25 or more on accessories or handbag, get free jewelry box. http://ow.ly/1tEYH
Amy Y - Before you start your #remodel, learn from this couple's extreme bathroom makeover http://bit.ly/d5ZqJG
Tom T - New site lets you rate your boss or co-workers http://bit.ly/ak7B7B
Russ C - This Oil Company CEO Made $52 Million Last Year. Or Maybe He Made $31 Million. http://su.pr/64a3ur
Frank L - http://twitpic.com/1b6j5l - Sketch townie bar in Bethlehem, PA with @mary and friends.
Elizabeth R - Bring the 3D experience home with full HD 3D-ready HDTVs and Blu-ray players. Learn about 3D at http://bit.ly/bAyAem
Charles M - Did you know Twitter and Facebook are the new target of cybercriminals? Check out these tips to protect yourself: http://bit.ly/cOAQED

Organization Group
HomeDeals- Save time in the kitchen with the Geroge Foreman grill or Kenmore Toaster oven, your choice only $39.99 ea save $10-$20 http://bit.ly/8Xe1jU
ComputerTown - So, do people actually like the iPad? http://bit.ly/bbJtAt
HealthNow - Brain scans may reveal early Alzheimer’s http://bit.ly/c5NYXG
CouponsForever - Spend $25 or more on accessories or handbag, get free jewelry box. http://ow.ly/1tEYH
HardwareHelp - Before you start your #remodel, learn from this couple's extreme bathroom makeover http://bit.ly/d5ZqJG
InternetInvestigator - New site lets you rate your boss or co-workers http://bit.ly/ak7B7B
NewsMediaOne - This Oil Company CEO Made $52 Million Last Year. Or Maybe He
Made $31 Million. http://su.pr/64a3ur
PubCrawCrew - http://twitpic.com/1b6j51 - Sketch townie bar in Bethlehem, PA with @jen and friends.
NextTech - Bring the 3D experience home with full HD 3D-ready HDTVs and Blu-ray players. Learn about 3D at http://bit.ly/bAyAem
TheGlobalExaminer- Did you know Twitter and Facebook are the new target of cybercriminals? Check out these tips to protect yourself: http://bit.ly/cOAQED
APPENDIX 5
*Responses to Tweets*

The information will remain the same, but indication of what each number means will appear directly beneath the number in surveymonkey.com

Q1: How interesting is the Tweet?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1=Not at all interesting 7=Very Interesting

Q2: How entertaining is the Tweet?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1=Not at all entertaining 7=Very Entertaining

Q3: How important is the Tweet?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1=Not at all important 7=Very Important

Q4: How useful is the Tweet?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1=Not at all useful 7=Very Useful

Q5: How likely are you to click on the link?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1=Not at all likely 7=Very Likely

Q6: How likely are you to retweet the link?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
1=Not at all likely 7=Very likely
APPENDIX 6
Gift Cards awarded

Jill Wendling and Rich Dettmer were selected to receive gift cards for their participation in the survey. Dettmer suggested using the gift card money for charity rather than for himself. Wendling later proposed a similar idea. All parties agreed to use the gift card money for the Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMHC) of Mid-Missouri.

- Mike Brannen, sent Saturday, August 14, 2010 7:10 PM
  “I saw on the news a few days ago the Ronald McDonald House in Columbia experienced some flooding problems and some families had to temporarily move out. I think perhaps the gift card total could go to them instead. Thoughts?”

- Rich Dettmer, received Saturday, August 14, 2010 8:53 PM
  “Works for me. Thanks!”

- Jill Wendling, received Saturday, August 14, 2010 9:38 PM
  “Sounds great!”

- RMHC, received Tuesday, August 17, 2010 10:47 AM
  “Dear Mike,

  Please accept our sincere thanks for your donation of $50.00 to Ronald McDonald House Charities of Mid-Missouri! Your thoughtfulness and support allows us to continue providing our services to families in their great time of need.

  Thank you for helping us “lift children and families to a better tomorrow.” Because of your generosity, we are able to fulfill our mission.

  Sincerely,
  RMHC of Mid-Missouri Staff

  Donation Amount: $50.00

  Your contribution may be tax-deductible as allowed by law. Please see your tax consultant. Retain this receipt as documentation for your records. It is necessary for any available federal income tax deduction.”
APPENDIX 7
IRB Approvals

IRB Approval for gift card compensation

Email from Kyle A. Newell-Groshong
Received Thursday, April 15, 2010 3:25 PM
Title: Accounting Services Approval for IRB 1166337

“Per our conversation, since you are funding subject compensation personally our office does not need to approve the method you use to compensate participants. Thank you for checking with our office.”

IRB Approval for study

Email from Rachel D. Schmidt
Received Friday, April 23, 2010 3:29 PM
Title: Campus IRB Exempt Approval Letter: IRB # 1166337

“Dear Investigator:

Your human subject research project entitled Motivational Use of Twitter meets the criteria for EXEMPT APPROVAL and will expire on April 23, 2011. Your approval will be contingent upon your agreement to annually submit the "Annual Exempt Research Certification" form to maintain current IRB approval.

You must submit the Annual Exempt Research Certification form 30 days prior to the expiration date. Failure to timely submit the certification form by the deadline will result in automatic expiration of IRB approval.

Study Changes: If you wish to revise your exempt project, you must complete the Exempt Amendment Form for review.

Please be aware that all human subject research activities must receive prior approval by the IRB prior to initiation, regardless of the review level status. If you have any questions regarding the IRB process, do not hesitate to contact the Campus IRB office at (573) 882-9585.

Campus Institutional Review Board