

Public Abstract

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Title:Hospitals on Facebook -- Uncovering Fans' Uses and Gratifications

This thesis uses qualitative analysis to discover what uses and gratifications fans are receiving from hospital Facebook pages. The research centers on the fan page administered by Boone Hospital Center, located in Columbia, Mo.

Using a series of 18 semi-structured interviews, this research discovered that hospital fans seek hospital information and self-expression from their Facebook interaction with hospitals. They report obtaining entertainment, hospital information, job satisfaction, reinforcement of existing beliefs and social interaction. These gratifications vary depending on whether the participant was a community member or hospital employee. This research also shows that hospital Facebook pages largely do not alter fans' impressions of the hospital and have little influence over future health care decisions. Other findings include a description of a typical hospital Facebook fan and information about the best times to reach different fan groups.

The research also includes a list of practical tips hospital Facebook administrators can use to help engage their fans.