

WHY SHOULD THEY COMMENT? UNDERSTANDING LOCAL TELEVISION  
NEWS VIEWERS' MOTIVATION FOR COMMENTING ON STATIONS'  
FACEBOOK PAGES

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

WHY SHOULD THEY COMMENT? UNDERSTANDING LOCAL TELEVISION  
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**Abstract**

171 participants, recruited from a large Midwestern university, viewed a mock Facebook post from a local television news station. The four conditions each featured the same news story, but some treatments had a statement that said viewers' comments would appear on air during the television newscast, and some treatments had comments showing engagement between the viewers and the news personality who posted the story. Participants rated how motivated they were to comment on the Facebook post themselves, along with their status-seeking motivation, connectedness motivation, and how much they felt the station cared about its viewers.

The results revealed engagement from the news personality with viewers on the Facebook post made participants feel connected, like they could achieve social-status, and cared for, but not motivated to comment on the Facebook post. The statement saying viewers' comments would appear on television did not make participants feel connected, like they could achieve social-status, or cared for, nor did it motivate them to comment on the Facebook post

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

As social media use increases, more people are getting and sharing news through social media than ever before. Social media are now a fierce competitors for television stations' audiences, but they do not have to be. Instead, stations can use social media to their advantage, gain new viewers, and evolve with the times to expand how they deliver news content to their audience. Roger Gafke explains an imminent shift in the way news stories are collected. He writes,

The customary way of doing stories is to collect (a) information from official sources, (b) opinions of decision makers and influential people and sometimes the (c) experiences of ordinary people. News stations then present the 'story' that emerges from that process to the public intending to give the public information and insights they might not have had. Stations have the opportunity to turn that around – gather information from the present, and insights and information to decision makers they might not have had. This requires intense engagement with the public throughout the issue identification and reporting phases of a journalist's work (R. Gafke, personal communication, October 19, 2013).

Social media are the tool that can reach audiences in a new way, but it also has the opportunity to reach new viewers. However, for social media to be used to

gain more viewers, it must also appeal to current viewers. To attract current viewers to social media, stations must understand what motivates people to comment on a television station's social media page. This research explores two possible motivations for viewers to comment on a station's Facebook page. It also provides practical implications for how stations can motivate viewers to comment.

Uses and gratifications theory has been used to study audiences for nearly a century. It has advanced and developed over time to explain motivations for audiences seeking new types of media, from the Internet to, more recently, social media. For more than the past decade, researchers have explored uses and gratifications for the Internet. More recently, the research has focused on social media. A 2013 study by the Pew Research Center found 30 percent of American adults get news from Facebook. However, the same study also found only 34 percent of those news consumers "like" or follow news organizations, reporters, or commentators on Facebook (Pew Research Center, 2013). The current study explores uses and gratifications for Facebook, specifically local television news stations' Facebook pages, to determine why people do or do not comment on these pages. Little research has explored local television stations' Facebook pages, or why Facebook users engage with these pages. This research will inform television news stations on two motivations, connectedness and status-seeking, that may help increase viewers' engagement with their Facebook page, and it will help stations better understand what motivates viewers to comment on their



Facebook page. This, in turn, provides stations with information that could increase both their Facebook audience and their on air newscast audience.

### **Purpose of Study**

The goal of the present research is to identify social media posting motives displayed by news consumers who may post on local television news stations' Facebook pages. The current study seeks to fill a gap in the literature, where not much research has been done on motivation to comment on Facebook. Most literature on Facebook motivation has to do with why people join Facebook, why people use Facebook groups, Facebook use and politics, and how Facebook contributes to civic engagement. The current study connects a gap between uses and gratifications for television viewing and uses and gratifications for social media use. Additionally, it adds to the literature on Facebook business pages, and users' motivation for engaging with these pages.

### **Rationale**

Viewers are an essential component the broadcast news industry, as without viewers, there's no reason to broadcast the news. Social media provides local television news stations the opportunity to reach more viewers in more places than ever before, and, potentially, the ability to acquire new viewers. Social media also give news consumers the ability to communicate and engage with local television news stations more easily than ever before. It is important to understand why news consumers engage with stations via social media because understanding that motivation allows stations to tailor their messages to meet news consumers' needs, and grow their audience.

To extend existing research on social media commenting motives, it is necessary to examine specific motives that may influence why one engages with a local television news station on Facebook. New technologies and platforms, such as Facebook, make it easier than ever for people to engage with their local television news station. Existing research could benefit from an understanding of the different types of motivations that prompt news consumers to post online reviews. To better understand motivation for commenting on local television news stations' Facebook pages, the study examines two motivations: status seeking and connectedness. To examine connectedness motivation, the study looks at how news personalities' interaction with viewers affects one's motivation to comment on that station's Facebook page. To examine status seeking motivation, the study looks at how one knowing his or her Facebook comment could be shown on air during a news broadcast affects his or her motivation to comment on that station's Facebook page.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

### **Social Media's Increasing Role in News**

Recent events across the globe have shown social media's prominence in sharing and consuming news. The Internet and social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube) revolutionized the way news content is dispersed and consumed. For example, use of chemical weapons in Syria in September 2013 became news across the globe after videos of people suffering from the weapons were posted on YouTube. As demonstrated by events in Syria, news can now be shared across the world almost instantly via social media. In addition to sharing news, social media allows people to consume news faster than ever before. While news consumers used to have to wait for the evening newscast or a newspaper delivery, people can now use social media notifications, sent directly to one's smart phone or tablet, to stay informed and updated on breaking news practically in real time. Local television news stations can use social media to grow their audiences by providing news updates throughout the day, which, in turn, can increase newscast viewership. Social media also creates the opportunity for news stations to attract new followers, as people see their social media friends engaging with news stations online. It also affords news stations the possibility of finding new stories and accessing new sources.

One characteristic that differentiates social media users from other Internet news consumers is the desire to share content. User-generated content

makes people active producers instead of passive consumers (Nov et al., 2010). Further, people who produce content are able to connect with others who share similar problems, opinions, and interests (Cho, Chen, & Chung, 2010). However, motivations for creating content could be vastly different from motivations for consuming content. Thus, it is important for television news stations that want to increase social media engagement to know what motivates its consumers to engage with, that is, create content on, its social media pages.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Uses and gratifications theory (U&G) examines why people use media, and what motivates their consumption behavior. Since U&G was first explored in the 1940s, it has transformed to explain motivations associated with media consumption and emerging technologies (Ruggiero, 2000). U&G framework explains media use in terms of expected positive outcomes of a behavior, or gratifications. The theory assumes people actively seek media in specific ways, which gives them with the ability to satisfy a wide variety of needs (Katz, Blumler, Gurevitch, 1974). Demassification is media users' ability to select which media they consume. Chamberlain (1994) states an individual media user is able, through newer technologies, to pick from a large selection of media, previously shared only with other individuals as mass media. Social media typifies demassification, as it allows people to tailor media messages to their own wants and needs. For example, people can choose whom they follow on Twitter and "like" on Facebook, thus selecting information they want to receive, and avoiding information they do not want. With the rise of the Internet and social media,

U&G has been used to examine motivations behind both consumption and demassification.

The current study uses U&G to look specifically at motivations for commenting on a local television station's Facebook page. Raacke and Bonds-Raake (2008) also used U&G to study Facebook use. They argued that U&G is applicable to studying motivations for Facebook use because Facebook users control whom they follow and with whom they engage. Thus, this research also uses U&G to examine motivations for commenting on a news station's Facebook page.

### **Why Facebook?**

While Facebook and Twitter are both used for news consumption, interactivity, and sharing, there is a distinct difference in the number of users who consume news from each site. As of September 2013, 52 percent of Twitter users and 47 percent of Facebook users get news from the social networking sites (Holcomb et al., 2013). While a higher percentage of Twitter users use the site to consume news, Facebook has more active monthly users than Twitter: 1.19 billion compared to 241 million, respectively (Facebook.com, Twitter.com). Thus, more people use Facebook than Twitter to consume news. Additionally, 71 percent of the people who gets news on Twitter also get news from Facebook, while 19 percent of those who get news on Facebook also get news from Twitter.

Because Twitter is a micro-blogging platform, it allows users to post brief comments. Twitter users are limited to 140 characters per post, or "tweet." Facebook, on the other hand, does not limit the amount of characters one can

type in his or her post on the website (Twitter, 2009). When one uses social media to share his or her thoughts on the news, he or she has the ability to write more in one single post on Facebook than on Twitter.

News stations and organizations are also limited by the 140-character count, which limits the amount of news they can disseminate in one post. This often leads to news organizations posting links on Twitter to the full story on the organization's website or Facebook page, which navigates the consumer away from Twitter. Thus, the present study uses Facebook as the social networking website because more people use it to consume news. Additionally, the present study measures motivations for commenting on news on social media, and with Facebook, people are able to write more characters when they comment on news posts than on Twitter. Finally, news organizations are able to share more on one single Facebook post than they can with one single Twitter, which allows a longer post to be written for the present study, compared to a Twitter post.

### **Facebook's Evolution**

Facebook (Facebook.com) was launched in February 2004 by then Harvard student Mark Zuckerberg. It is now the largest social networking site in the world, with more than 1.19 billion active users per month as of September 2013 (Facebook.com). Not only can users engage with other users, but individuals can now also connect with businesses.

Facebook business pages are opportunity for local television news stations to share new stories with their viewers. These pages provide viewers with another platform to connect with news stations. They allow viewers to talk with station

reporters, anchors, and employees, and voice their opinions on a station's news coverage. These pages also give stations the ability to acquire new viewers and followers. When a Facebook user comments on these pages, their Facebook friends are able to see the comments. This kind of engagement between viewers and stations gives stations the opportunity to increase their on-air newscast and Facebook audiences. In order to do this, however, stations must know how to motivate users to comment on their pages.

### **Parasocial Interaction**

U&G assumes people actively seek different forms of media, and specific content, which allows them to gratify a wide variety of needs (Katz et al., 1974). Greer & Ferguson (2011) make the connection between U&G and how audiences connect with television characters, known as parasocial interaction. They write, "A natural extension of this proposition (U&G) involves the characters or personalities who appear on TV and the way people interact with them (148)." Horton & Wohl (1956) coined the term to describe how an audience bonds with media personalities. Parasocial interaction describes how people get to know someone, usually of higher status, they'd never actually talked to or met. Horton & Wohl originally used parasocial interaction to describe how radio listeners connect with radio personalities by listening to them over time. They later applied the same idea to explain how television viewers respond to the characters they watch on screen, as if those characters were having a personal conversation with the viewer. The relationship between the audience and media personality, however, is one-sided.

Since 1956, parasocial interaction has been examined in different contexts related to television, and its definition has expanded to include any media figure, not just a television character or actor. For example, Levy (1979) and Houlberg (1984) each found audiences experience parasocial interactions with news personalities when watching television news broadcasts. The current study takes past research one step further, and examines how audiences actually do connect with television news people through social media. While relationships and encounters with news personalities were once virtually unattainable, social media has revolutionized the way audiences and these media figures connect. Now, as social media has allowed relationships between viewers and media figures to become two sided, it is important to examine if social media interactions influence how people feel about media figures engaging with the public. Specifically, the current study examines whether seeing a news personality engaging with viewers on Facebook causes one to feel like the news personality and station he/she works for cares about the viewers.

### **Social Media: A Way to Connect, Socially**

Research done on U&G stipulates individuals engage with others online to feel like they belong. Larose, Mastro, & Eastin (2001) examined uses and gratifications for Internet use and hypothesized that social outcome expectations are positively related to Internet usage. Researchers defined social outcomes as developing relationships over the Internet. They found social outcome expectations are positively related to Internet usage. While this study indicates a positive relationship between social outcome motivation and Internet use, the



study was conducted before the rise of social media, and does not examine social media sites specifically. However, Ezumah (2013) took examining social motivations for Internet usage one step further, and did look specifically at motivation for using social networking sites. The study found social motivation was the main reason respondents use social media. Keeping in touch with friends, keeping in touch with family, and reconnecting with old friends were all found to be motivations for using social networking sites. One weakness of this study is that it only examined college students' motivations for using social media, and cannot generalize these findings to other age groups. However, these studies still collectively show a positive relationship between desired social connections and motivation for Internet and social media use.

More research shows a connection between social networking sites and social motivation. Raacke & Bonds-Raacke (2008) examined uses and gratifications for Myspace and Facebook use. The study found some of the most popular uses and gratifications for having an account with one or both of the social networking sites were keeping in touch with old and new friends (96 percent and 91 percent, respectively) and making new friends (56 percent). Interestingly, the study found "to feel connected" was a less commonly reported uses and gratifications, with 19% of participants saying that's why they use the sites. Despite the study's wording, the keeping in touch with friends uses and gratifications imply social outcome is positively related to Myspace and Facebook use.

Research also shows a specific connection between motivation for using Twitter and feeling a sense of social connectedness. Greer & Ferguson (2011) related Twitter use with television news, and looked specifically at motivations for television news consumers to follow television news personalities on Twitter. They also examined how following these personalities on Twitter impacted the consumers' affinity toward the station at which the personalities work. The study found social motivation was the main reason people follow news personalities on twitter. That is, participants felt the news personalities' tweets were a point of connection between themselves and the news personality. Additionally, the study found television news personalities on Twitter tend to enhance their followers' affinity toward their station, and help drive their followers to watch the on air newscasts. The study indicates that followers felt the Tweets were more personal and less informational because they came from the news personality, which in part explains why followers felt affinity toward the personalities' news station. While the study did find a positive relationship between social motivation and following news personalities on Twitter, the study is limited to Twitter, and does not look at any other social media sites.

Marwick & Boyd (2011) studied the 300 most popular Twitter accounts, 237 of which belonged to celebrities, and conducted interviews with the people who followed those accounts to determine why they engage with celebrities on Twitter. They found Twitter users who follow celebrities felt a sense of intimacy, closeness, and connection with the celebrities. Engaging with celebrities on Twitter made the people feel as though they had personal insights into the

celebrities' lives, which caused them to feel close to the celebrity. This study did not look specifically at news personalities, and only studied celebrities on Twitter.

Research also indicates a relationship between social motivation and sharing news on social media. Unlike the previously mentioned studies, which focused on connectedness as a motivation for news consumption, Lee & Ma (2012) focused on motivations for news sharing via social media. The study examined the influences of information seeking, socializing, entertainment, status seeking and prior social media sharing experience on motivation for sharing news via social media. The study found participants were more likely to share news stories via social media if they were motivated by gratifications of information seeking, status seeking, and socializing, or connectedness.

These studies taken together find social engagements and connections are positive motivators for Internet and social media consumption and dispersion. Thus, I hypothesize the possibility of feeling connected to and engaging with a news personality motivates social media users to engage with television news stations' social media pages. Connected and connectedness are feeling some sort of social tie to the news personality.

**H1: Seeing a television news stations' news personality respond to viewers' comments on Facebook will cause the viewer to feel a sense of connectedness.**

**H2: A statement on a Facebook post saying viewers' comments may be shown and read on air during a local television newscast will make participants feel a sense of connectedness.**

**H3: Seeing a television news station's news personality respond to viewers' comments on Facebook is positively associated with viewers' motivation to comment on the station's Facebook page.**

## **Social Media: A Way to Gain Status**

Status seeking explains how engaging with social media helps one feel a sense of status among others. Similar to Lee & Ma (2012) mentioned previously, Hew & Hara (2007) found people share knowledge to be recognized by others. The study looked specifically at motivations for sharing information with others online and found that in addition to several motivations for sharing information, one motivation was gaining a better reputation. The study suggests one practical implication to leverage this motivator is to assign status to individuals and make this status apparent. I believe one way television news stations can do this is to discuss viewers' social media comments during newscasts. I hypothesize telling viewers via Facebook that their comments could be shown on air during a newscast will motivate viewers to comment on the station's Facebook page because of the potential status they perceive they will gain from being recognized on television. Although Hew and Hara (2007) only looks at sharing content on the Internet as a whole and does not look specifically at social media, I believe a study looking exclusively at Facebook motivations would have similar findings.

Research also shows status seeking is a motivation for simply using the Internet. LaRose & Eastin (2004) hypothesized expected status outcome, among other motivators, is directly related to Internet usage. It found one of the main motivators for using the Internet is obtaining social status. One of the study's strengths is its random sample of diverse adults of varying ages, however the authors state the study could be improved with fewer male and more female

participants. The researchers found, like previous results found in research done only with college-aged participants, social gratifications were significantly related to Internet usage. The authors write, “It appears that social status...might be the prime mover in Internet usage” (373).

Research also shows a positive relationship between status seeking and motivation for using Facebook. Park et al. (2009) examined uses and gratifications theory and social outcomes for Facebook users. The study found people actually join Facebook groups to seek status. However, the participants in this study were all college students at two Texas universities, and the results cannot be generalized to the US population or the US college student population.

Marwick & Boyd (2011) found a positive relationship between status seeking and using Twitter. Specifically, the study examined why people engage with celebrities on Twitter. They write,

Celebrity practitioners use public acknowledgment, in the form of @replies, to connect with others. Fans @reply to famous people not only in the hope of receiving a reply, but to display a relationship, whether positive or negative. If fans receive @replies back, they function as a mark of status and are publicized within the fan community. Celebrity practitioners’ public acknowledgement of friends, peers, and colleagues is rarely critical, primarily adhering to frontstage norms of public appearance. Famous people mention fans to perform connection and availability, give back to loyal followers, and manage their popularity (145).

Marwick & Boyd did not look specifically at news personalities as celebrities, however, news personalities are usually well known by the people in their community because they're on television, and usually have some sort of celebrity status.

These studies taken together suggest status seeking is a motivator for online activity, and social media use. The hypotheses hold people will comment on a local television news station's Facebook page if they think it will help them attain status.

**H4: Seeing a television news stations' news personality respond to viewers' comments on Facebook will cause the participant to feel they can gain social status by commenting on the Facebook post.**

**H5: A statement on a Facebook post saying viewers' comments may be shown and read on air during a local television newscast will make participants feel they can gain social status by commenting on the Facebook post.**

**H6: A statement on a Facebook post saying viewers' comments may be shown and read on air during a local television newscast is positively associated with participants' motivation to comment on the station's Facebook page.**

Additionally, an interaction effect should exist for H1b and H2b such that people who see a news personality engaging with viewers and are told their comments may be show during a live broadcast, will have the highest motivation to comment.

**H7: News personality engagement and notification that viewers' comments may appear on air will interact on motivation such that participants' motivation to comment will be highest when the news personality responds to viewers' Facebook comments and there is a notification that viewers' comments may appear on air.**

## **Chapter Three: Method**

### **Research Design**

The study used a 2 (news personality engagement vs. no news personality engagement) x 2 (statement saying viewers' Facebook comments could air on television vs. no such statement) between-subjects experimental design.

### **Sample**

G\*Power software was used to calculate a power analysis for the ANOVA: Fixed effects, special, main effects, and interactions statistical test, with effect size .25, alpha error probability = .05, power = .8, 4 groups. This reflected a needed total sample size of  $N = 179$ . Thus 45 participants were needed for each condition, and the number of participants in each group must be equal, resulting in a total sample size of  $N = 180$ . Participants were recruited from a large Midwestern university. Participants included 51 males and 114 females. The age range of participants was 18 to 31, with a mean age of 22. Ethnicities of participants was 80 percent Caucasian, 6.5 percent African American, 4.7 percent Asian, 1.2 percent Native American, 2.9 percent Hispanic, and 2.4 percent other.

### **Independent Variables**

The first independent variable is the engagement of a television news personality on the station's social media pages. This variable is conceptualized as

a television news personality commenting on Facebook pages and having conversations with news viewers via the station's Facebook page. The variable was operationalized in two conditions, engagement and no engagement. In the first condition, participants saw a news article on a social media page with several comments from viewers as well as the news personality. There was engagement with and conversations between the news personality and viewers. In the second condition, participants saw the same news article with comments strictly from viewers (no news personality engagement or comments). Both of these conditions were created with Adobe InDesign, and are the same story. The comments were identical in each condition, except the first condition had additional comments and engagement from the news personality.

The second independent variable is telling viewers via Facebook that their comments may air on the television news broadcast. This variable is conceptualized as a statement on a Facebook story on a local television news station's Facebook page saying some of viewers' comments may air during the live television broadcast. This variable was operationalized at two levels: having the statement and not having the statement. In the first condition, participants saw a news article on a Facebook page with a statement saying some of the viewers' comments may be selected to air during the television broadcast. In the second condition, participants saw the same exact news article, but without a statement. Both of these conditions were created with Adobe InDesign, and were the same story. The articles were identical in each condition, except the first



condition will have one additional statement about the comments possibly airing on television.

The manipulation employed four different Facebook pages, resulting in four treatments. The first treatment was a Facebook post with a statement that the comments may air on television, and comments from the news personality and conversations between the news personality and viewers. The second treatment was a Facebook post without a statement that the comments may air on television, and comments from the news personality and conversations between the news personality and viewers. The third treatment was a Facebook post with a statement that comments may air on television, and no comments from or conversations with the news personality. The fourth treatment was a Facebook post without a statement that the comments may air on television, and no comments from or conversations with the news anchor. Each participant in the study was randomly assigned to one of these four treatments.

### **Dependent Variables**

The dependent variable in the study is gratifications sought and obtained, which was conceptualized as the motivation to comment on a local television station's Facebook page. Specifically, this study looked at two motivations: status-seeking motivation and connectedness motivation. To measure participants' general motivation to comment on the presented story, status-seeking motivation, and connectedness motivation, they answered 5-point Likert scale questions ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Participants answered the questions after exposure to the independent variable. (Questions

are listed in the Appendix.) The questions assessed how likely the participant is to comment on the Facebook post they were exposed to in the first part of the experiment. The questions are adapted from Rubin (1983), which used U&G to examine motivations for television viewing, and Leung (2009), which used U&G to examine motivations for online user generated content. The present study used survey questions from Rubin (1983) studies because the scale has been used multiple times since its first use 30 years ago, which helps ensure its reliability. Questions adapted from Leung (2009) address status-seeking motivations, which Rubin (1983) does not measure. Together, the questions address recognition/status seeking motivations and social/connectedness motivations to address the current study's hypotheses. A factor analysis was conducted to ensure questions are grouped into the appropriate categories, which ensures reliability.

### **Stimulus**

Stimulus materials for the four treatments were developed from a story from KOMU-TV's Facebook page. KOMU and NBC branding and logos were removed to not add confounding variables. The story was adapted into a fake Facebook post using Adobe InDesign. Additionally, the design adapted comments on the Facebook post from viewers and the news personality (depending on which treatment participants are exposed to). The first treatment had a statement and news personality engagement. The second treatment was the same as the first, but without the statement. The third had the statement but no news personality engagement. The fourth had neither the statement nor the news personality engagement.

## **Measures**

The questionnaires addressed two types of motivation, status seeking and connectedness, and motivation in general. Each participant answered the questions on the questionnaire. To assess status seeking, the participant responded to questions asking whether they feel motivated to comment on a station's Facebook page knowing their comments may appear on air during the broadcast. To assess connectedness, the participant responded to questions asking whether they feel motivated to comment on a station's Facebook page by being able to engage with the station's news personality. All questions used a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

The survey also included a manipulation check to make sure participants noticed the news personality's engagement with viewers and/or the statement saying viewers' comments may appear on-air during the television broadcast. These questions are included in the appendix under "Manipulation checks." A t-test was used to make sure there is a noticeable difference between the treatments.

## **Procedure**

Participants completed the experiment online using Qualtrics survey software. Subjects were randomly assigned to one of four treatments, consisting of a link to an online, replicated Facebook page. Participants were instructed to read the Facebook post and comments before advancing to the questionnaire. After this, participants completed a questionnaire measuring their motivation to comment on a local television station's Facebook page. To help ensure

participants carefully read the Facebook page, the instructions stated that after they view the page, they would be asked to answer questions about what they read. These questions are included in the appendix under “Memory questions.”

## Chapter Four: Results

To check the study's news personality engagement manipulation, an independent sample *t* test comparing the mean scores of participants who saw news personality engagement and the participants who did not see news personality engagement found a significant difference between the means of the two groups ( $t(167) = 6.16, p < .05$ ). The mean of the participants who did not see news personality engagement was significantly lower ( $M = 3.17, SD = 1.30$ ) than the mean of the participants who did see news personality engagement ( $M = 4.41, SD = 1.30$ ).

To check the study's TV statement manipulation, an independent sample *t* test was calculated comparing the mean scores of participants who saw the TV statement and the participants who did not see the TV statement. No significant difference was found ( $t(167) = .920, p > .05$ ). The mean of the people who saw the TV statement ( $M = 3.74, SD = .902$ ) was not significantly different from the mean of the people who did not see the TV statement ( $M = 3.61, SD = .904$ ). The manipulation check for the Facebook statement was not effective because it did not correctly assess the manipulation. The question was written as follows: "To what extent do you think the station will air viewers' comments during the television broadcast?" The way this question is written is asking participants their opinion about whether they believe the station, instead of what they actually saw when exposed to their condition.

Twelve questions relating to motivation were factor analyzed using principal component analysis with Varimax rotation and Kaiser's stopping criterion (factors with eigenvalue greater than 1 were selected). The analysis yielded two factors explaining 56.77 percent of the variance for all variables. Factor 1 had an eigenvalue of 5.48, and Factor 2 had an eigenvalue of 1.33. Factor 1 was labeled Status Seeking and is a composite index created by taking the mean of the following seven items ( $\alpha = .88$ ): I would establish my personal identity; I would gain respect and support, I would build up my confidence, I would feel satisfied, I would promote or publicize my expertise, I would feel recognized by others, and I would get my name out there. The first factor explained 33.58 percent of the total variance. Factor 2 was labeled Connectedness and is a composite index created by taking the mean of the following five items ( $\alpha = .76$ ): I would find others who express similar feelings to my own, I would be sharing my views, thoughts and experiences, I would be able to network with others, I would connect with others, and I would be appreciated by the news station. The second factor explained 23.19 percent of the total variance. All of the variables loaded at the .60 level or higher, indicating high commonality within the factors.

Hypothesis 1 predicted there would be a main effect for connectedness such that participants would report higher feelings of connectedness after seeing a television news stations' news personality respond to viewers' comments on Facebook, compared to participants who saw the same post without comments or engagement from the news personality. Hypothesis 2 predicted there would be a main effect for connectedness such that participants would report higher feelings

of connectedness after seeing a statement that some viewers' comments will appear on television. H1 and H2 were tested with a 2x2 between subjects factorial ANOVA. The mean connectedness level of participants who saw Facebook comments and engagement from the news personality was compared to the mean connectedness level of participants who saw the same post without comments from the news personality. The mean connectedness level of participants who saw the statement saying viewers' comments would appear on air was compared to the mean connectedness level of participants who saw the same post without the statement. There is a significant main effect of anchor engagement on connectedness ( $F(1,165) = 10.60, p < .01$ , Partial Eta Squared = .06).

Connectedness of participants who read a Facebook post with anchor engagement ( $M=3.43, SD=.65$ ) was significantly higher than connectedness of participants who read a Facebook post without anchor engagement. ( $M=3.07, SD=.76$ ). Therefore H1 was supported. There is no significant main effect of a TV statement on connectedness ( $F(1,165) = 2.86, p > .05$ , Partial Eta Squared = .02). Connectedness of participants who read a Facebook post with a TV statement ( $M=3.15, SD=.70$ ) did not differ significantly from connectedness of participants who read a Facebook post without a TV statement. ( $M=3.33, SD=.76$ ). Therefore H2 was not supported.

#### DEPENDENT VARIABLE DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS: Connectedness

	Anchor	No Anchor
TV Statement	$M=3.39$	$M=2.96$
	$SD= .58$	$SD=.74$
No TV Statement	$M=3.49$	$M=3.22$
	$SD= .73$	$SD= .76$

Hypothesis 4 predicted there would be a main effect for status seeking such that participants would report higher feelings of social status after seeing a television news stations' news personality respond to viewers' comments on Facebook, compared to participants who saw the same post without comments or engagement from the news personality. Hypothesis 5 predicted there would be a main effect for social status such that participants would report higher feelings of being able to attain social status by commenting on the Facebook post after seeing a statement that their comments could appear on television, compared to participants who see the same post without the statement that their comments could appear on television. H4 and H5 were tested with a 2x2 between subjects factorial ANOVA. The mean status seeking level of participants who saw Facebook comments and engagement from the news personality was compared to the mean status seeking level of participants who saw the same post without comments from the news personality. The mean status seeking of participants who saw the statement on the Facebook saying some viewers' comments would appear on air was compared to the mean status seeking of participants who saw the same post without the statement saying some comments would appear on air. There is a significant main effect of anchor engagement on status seeking ( $F(1,166) = 4.38, p < .05, \text{Partial Eta Squared} = .03$ ). Status seeking of participants who read a Facebook post with anchor engagement ( $M = 2.74, SD = .76$ ) was significantly higher than status seeking of participants who read a Facebook post without anchor engagement. ( $M = 2.49, SD = .84$ ). Therefore H4 was supported. There is a marginally significant main effect of a TV statement on status seeking



( $F(1,166) = 3.42, p=.07$ , Partial Eta Squared=.02). Status seeking of participants who read a Facebook post with a TV statement ( $M=2.51, SD=.79$ ) was marginally significantly lower than status seeking of participants who read a Facebook post without a TV statement. ( $M=2.72, SD=.83$ ). Therefore H5 was not supported.

**DEPENDENT VARIABLE DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS: Status Seeking**

	Anchor	No Anchor
TV Statement	M=2.63	M=2.40
	SD= .77	SD=.80
No TV Statement	M=2.90	M=2.59
	SD= .73	SD= .89

Hypothesis 3 predicted there would be a main effect for motivation such that participants would report higher motivation to comment on a local television station's Facebook page when shown a mock news story Facebook post in which a television news personality comments on the post and engages with other viewers who comment compared to participants who saw the same mock Facebook post without television news personality involvement or engagement. Hypothesis 6 predicted there would be a main effect for motivation such that participants would report higher motivation to comment on a local television station's Facebook page when shown a statement on a Facebook post that says viewers' Facebook comments about the story may be shown on air during the newscast, compared to the same newscast that did not show Facebook comments. H3 and H6 were tested with a 2x2 between subjects factorial ANOVA. The mean motivation of participants who saw Facebook comments and engagement from the news personality was compared to the mean motivation of participants who saw the same post without comments from the news personality. The mean

motivation of participants who saw the statement on the Facebook saying some viewers' comments would appear on air was compared to the mean motivation of participants who saw the same post without the statement saying some comments would appear on air. There was no significant main effect of anchor engagement on motivation ( $F(1,165) = .61, p > .05$ , Partial Eta Squared = .004). Motivation of participants who read a Facebook post with anchor engagement ( $M=2.19, SD=.96$ ) was not significantly different from motivation of participants who read a Facebook post without anchor engagement. ( $M=2.14, SD=.76$ ). Therefore H3 was not supported. There was no significant main effect of a TV statement on motivation ( $F(1,165) = .22, p > .05$ , Partial Eta Squared = .001). Motivation of participants who read a Facebook post with a TV statement ( $M=2.24, SD=.91$ ) did not differ significantly from motivation of participants who read a Facebook post without a TV statement. ( $M=2.11, SD=.90$ ). Therefore H6 was not supported.

#### DEPENDENT VARIABLE DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS: Motivation

	Anchor	No Anchor
TV Statement	$M=2.33$	$M=2.07$
	$SD= 1.01$	$SD=.90$
No TV Statement	$M=2.11$	$M=2.15$
	$SD= .75$	$SD= .91$

Hypothesis 7 predicted there was an interaction effect such that participants would report higher motivation to comment on a local television station's Facebook page when shown a mock news story Facebook post that has both a statement saying viewers' comments may appear on air during a newscast and comments from the television news personality. There was no interaction

effect between anchor engagement and TV statement on motivation. ( $F(1,165) = 1.11, p > .05$ , Partial Eta Squared = .007).

## **Chapter Five: Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to determine if a news personality commenting on a local television news station's Facebook page, and engaging with viewers via Facebook, affects how connected people feel to that station, affects their status seeking motivation, and influences their motivation to comment on the station's Facebook page. The results showed news personality engagement positively affected how connected people felt about the station and positively affected people's status seeking motivation, but did not affect peoples' motivation to comment on the station's Facebook page. Additionally, the purpose of this study was to determine if telling people via a statement posted on Facebook that some viewers' Facebook comments will be shown on air during the television broadcast affected peoples' feelings of connectedness and social status motivation, and influenced their motivation to comment on the station's Facebook page. The results showed that a statement saying some viewers' comments will be shown on air did affect peoples' feelings of connectedness to the station, but did not affect peoples' status seeking motivation, nor does it affect viewers' motivation to comment on the station's Facebook page.

One noteworthy difference between the ways connectedness and status seeking motivations were tested in this experiment is explained by the difference between "doing" something "saying" something. To test connectedness,

participants were exposed to a condition with either a Facebook post with engagement from a news personality, or no engagement from a personality. Participants who saw the news personality engagement didn't see a promise from the station that the anchor may respond to comments, but instead saw the anchor engaging with viewers. On the contrary, to test status-seeking motivation, participants were exposed to a condition with either a statement saying some Facebook comments would appear on air during the television broadcast, or no statement. Saying comments will appear on air is different from actually showing viewers that comments will appear on air. Saying comments will appear on air raises questions of credibility. That is, do people believe the station will show the comments? The connectedness manipulation of either a news personality commenting or not commenting demonstrates the news station actually doing something, whereas the statement on Facebook demonstrates the news station saying it will do something. The station actually doing something, i.e. the news personality commenting on the Facebook post, was affective in this study. However, the station saying it will do something was not affective, and this perhaps explains why the results for the Facebook statement were not significant. Ideas to improve this aspect of the study are included in "Future Research."

### **Limitations**

This study's sample was made up of journalism students and journalists. A possible explanation for why participants felt connected to the station, but not motivated to comment on the Facebook post themselves is because journalists are taught to be objective, and not reveal their own opinion or biases.

Commenting on a public Facebook post on a news station's Facebook page would conflict with what journalism students are taught not to do. One question in the study asks participants to type a response to the following question, "What makes you want to comment on a TV news station's Facebook page?" Some answers included, "As a journalist myself, I have to be careful what I put on the Internet," "I never do because I am a TV-journalist myself," and "Before working for KOMU and being in the J-school I would comment on national or local issues depending on their impact. Now, I don't comment." Another question in the study asks participants to type a response to the question, "What do you expect to get from commenting on a TV news station's Facebook page?" One participant wrote, "I don't do it because it will interfere with my position in the industry." Several other participants said they would not comment on a news station's Facebook page. Because the sample is journalism students, the motivation results seem to be biased.

### **Future Research**

Future research on motivation to comment on a news station's Facebook page should include conditions that expose participants to the station doing something instead of saying it will do something. For example, instead of showing participants a Facebook page with a statement saying the station will air comments, the study could use video clips from actual newscasts. The different treatments could show a video clip in which the station airs viewers' comments, and the same video clip but without viewers' comments. Using actual videos of newscasts helps eliminate the possibility of the news station's credibility

influencing the study, because instead of the station saying it will air comments, viewers see the station actually airing comments in a newscast.

Future research should also use a more generalizable sample. Journalism students are taught to keep their opinions to themselves, especially on social media and public forums. The results of this study seem to be influenced by the sample. Future research should consider the general population. Additionally, a study comparing findings from the general population to journalists and journalism students would help determine if being a journalist does, in fact, influence one's motivation to comment on a television station's Facebook page.

## **Chapter Six: Conclusion**

The purpose of the current research was to determine if new personality engagement with viewers on Facebook, and a statement posted to Facebook telling local television news viewers their comments may appear on air, influence people's motivation to comment on the station's Facebook page. A between-subjects experimental design was implemented in order to examine two Facebook posting motives: posting to feel connected and posting to gain social status. This study used one scale to examine each motivation. To assess status-seeking motivation, the current research Leung's 2009 scale. To examine connectedness motivation, the current research used Rubin's 1983 scale.

Adhering to U&G theory, this study sought to identify motives that influence news consumers' interest in commenting on a local television news station's Facebook page. Results showed a news personality engaging with viewers on Facebook can increase people feeling connected to the news personality and their status seeking. Results showed a news personality engaging with viewers on Facebook did not increase motivation to comment on the Facebook post. Results showed the presence of a TV statement has no effect on connectedness or motivation. Contrary to the hypothesis, the presence of a TV statement has a marginally significant negative effect on status seeking.

The current study made a step toward understanding how a news personality engaging with viewers on Facebook influences how connected one



feels. The identification of Facebook posting motives extends present research by helping fill a gap in social media literature.

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## **Appendix I**

### **Questionnaire**

After viewing the Facebook post, participants answered the following questions. Questions 1-13 were rating scales from 1 to 5, with one being 'strongly disagree' and five being 'strongly agree.'

Rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:

If I commented on this Facebook post:

#### **Status seeking/Recognition needs:**

1. I would establish my personal identity
2. I would gain respect and support.
3. I would build up my confidence.
4. I would feel satisfied
5. I would promote or publicize my expertise.
6. I would feel recognized by others.
7. I would get my name out there.

#### **Connectedness/Social needs:**

8. I would find others who express similar feelings to my own.
9. I would be sharing my views, thoughts, and experience.
10. I would be able to network with others.
11. I would connect with others.
12. I would be appreciated by the news station.

Participants typed their own responses to the following questions:

13. What makes you want to comment on a TV news station's Facebook page?
14. What do you expect to get from commenting on a TV news station's Facebook page?

**Manipulation checks:**

Questions 16-17 were rating scales from 1 to 5, with one being 'strongly disagree' and five being 'strongly agree'.

Rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:

15. The reporter who wrote the Facebook post responded to viewers' comments on the Facebook post.
16. The station will air some viewers' comments.

Questions 18-23 were rating scales from 1 to 5, with one being 'strongly disagree' and five being 'strongly agree' or with one being 'not at all likely' and 5 being 'very likely'.

17. How likely are you to comment on this Facebook post?
18. After seeing this Facebook post, how likely would you be to comment on other stories from the same television news station's Facebook page?
19. I think the station cares about what I have to say.
20. If I think a station cares about what I have to say, I am more likely to comment on its Facebook page.
21. I think someone who works for this station would read my comment and possibly reply.

22. If I think someone who works for the station will read my comment and possibly reply, I am more likely to comment on its Facebook page.

### **Memory Questions**

23. Has the student been formally charged? Choose yes or no.

24. What did the student do to the yearbook?

a. Changed a student's picture

b. Changed a student's name

25. Is the student facing misdemeanor or felony charges?

26. Was the student arrested?

### **Demographics**

27. How old are you?

28. What is your ethnicity?

29. What is your sex?

## Appendix 2

TABLE 1: DEPENDENT VARIABLE DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

### Connectedness

	Anchor	No Anchor
TV Statement	M=3.39	M=2.96
	SD= .58	SD=.74
No TV Statement	M=3.49	M=3.22
	SD= .73	SD= .76

### Status Seeking

	Anchor	No Anchor
TV Statement	M=2.63	M=2.40
	SD= .77	SD=.80
No TV Statement	M=2.90	M=2.59
	SD= .73	SD= .89

### Motivation

	Anchor	No Anchor
TV Statement	M=2.33	M=2.07
	SD= 1.01	SD=.90
No TV Statement	M=2.11	M=2.15
	SD= .75	SD= .91



### Appendix 3

TABLE 2: FACTOR LOADINGS FOR STATUS SEEKING QUESTIONS

QUESTION	FACTOR LOADINGS
I would establish my personal identity	0.644
I would gain respect and support.	0.834
I would build up my confidence.	0.807
I would feel satisfied	0.726
I would promote or publicize my expertise.	0.745
I would feel recognized by others.	0.678
I would get my name out there.	0.669

## Appendix 4

TABLE 3: FACTOR LOADINGS FOR CONNECTEDNESS QUESTIONS

QUESTION	FACTOR LOADINGS
I would find others who express similar feelings to my own.	0.794
I would be sharing my views, thoughts, and experience.	0.688
I would be able to network with others.	0.708
I would connect with others.	0.701
I would be appreciated by the news station.	0.634