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Marketing Within Student Affairs: What is the Silver Bullet?

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MARKETING WITHIN STUDENT AFFAIRS: WHAT IS THE SILVER BULLET?

by

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A Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Science

Department of Mass Communication and Media Arts
in the Graduate School
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
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RESEARCH PAPER APPROVAL

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in the field of Professional Media and Media Management

Approved by:

Dr. Cinzia Padovani, Chair

Graduate School
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

In the past few years, SIU Carbondale has experienced a steady decline in student participation within the student affairs departments. In an effort to increase involvement, we need to assess students affectively, determine what programs and services students want, and find the most effective way to market to this unique population – all while being mindful of the financial constraints of our budget.

The SIU Student Center is the living room of campus. There you can enjoy a meal or snacks at the Marketplace Food Court, take their mind off of studies at Bowling & Billiards or the Craft Shop, relax in their student lounges, take advantage of one of many study rooms, shop in the University Bookstore, or utilize services. Even though students are aware of what the Student Center has to offer, the question is, why do they not take advantage of it more frequently or at all? Market trends are constantly changing, just as programming and advertising to college students should be. In this study, I will be examining the Southern Illinois University Student Center's marketing techniques utilized over a period of eight months and their corresponding analytics.

CHAPTER 2: THESIS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research shows that students who participate in some kind of extracurricular activity are overall better students with a higher GPA and have an overall enhanced campus experience. According to usnews.com, five reasons to get more involved on college campuses include “it allows students to become more connected to their school, it helps them build community, it allows them to discover their passions and strengths, it is a resume builder, and busier students do better in all areas” (J. Mayfield, 2011). However, sometimes students need a little nudge to get started. How do we help them? There are many marketing tactics available to us, but what actually works in a university setting? Because involvement plays such a significant role in the overall university experience, it is crucial to understand the needs of the current student population and help them understand that experiences outside of the classroom will expand their knowledge and cultivate character that will foster a more proficient individual. Therefore, these questions need addressed:

Question 1: In what areas should student affairs marketing teams be focusing to reach students? (I.e. tables, events, face to face, guerrilla marketing, social media, flyers, videos, etc.)

Question 2: What content gets students more involved in social media and on-campus events? What are students most interested in?

Question 3: How are students receiving our information? If they aren't, why not?

CHAPTER 3:

CULTIVATING THE STUDENT POPULATION

Knowing from personal experience, promoting to college students is a market sector entirely to itself. Whether universities are trying to reach out to students about events happening on campus, departments and services to be utilized, recreational activities, or academic auxiliaries; it is hard to get students to pay attention. These amenities are not for the benefit of the staff running them, but for the students so they may have the best experience while away at school. In a study conducted by Katherine Smith, it was concluded that millennials have a definite preference for online advertising (Smith, 2011). Does this mean that traditional marketing on college campuses is dead? Absolutely not. According to business.com, traditional marketing is very much alive. As I personally work in marketing and try to target college students on a daily basis, Matt Alderton of business.com has given some of the best advice I have found for marketing on campuses. One piece of advice is “Remember that while the college market is incredibly stable and static, individual student consumers are moving targets, changing both attitudes and addresses frequently” (Alderton, 2017). This makes me feel like college students appreciate a good mix of marketing techniques. As some appreciate a good ol’ fashioned flyer hanging on the bulletin board outside of their classrooms, students also like to see that their university is keeping up with the modern trends. Discussing the latest pop culture in the social media world, utilizing the newest platforms that are released, and being in the know and involved in the upcoming movements in the millennial world are all things that I have found students to be impressed by. Some may think that the classic sidewalk ad written in chalk or fellow

students giving out handbills in the hub of campus are things of the past, these techniques still catch the eyes of students.

So, what gets them to engage with the information they are receiving? According to one of the leading event companies in the nation, Eventbrite.com believes they have figured out the key to getting millennials to engage and participate in events. They claim that you need to create “FOMO” (Fear Of Missing Out). “Nearly 7 in 10 (69%) millennials indicate that they experience the fear of missing out, or FOMO” (Eventbrite.com). In a world where social experience is constantly broadcasted for the world to see, this shared sentiment is one of the largest drivers of millennials. Creating a feeling of FOMO ultimately encourages students to show up, participate, and engage so they no longer believe that they have missed out on something great. You want students to show up to your event? Then create a marketing strategy that outlines something they do not want to miss. Triggering individuals of FOMO makes them more likely to take action.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGIES

Pilot Survey

For my first research tactic, I decided to pilot a survey that was distributed around Southern Illinois University both digitally and in person in hopes of honing in on a more specific topic geared toward our own campus. The purpose was to gain a better vision of where I needed to lead this overall study.

In this survey, students are asked to answer questions pertaining to their involvement in events on campus, participation in extracurricular activities, their social media tendencies, how regularly they are visiting the SIU Student Center and their views on the building's marketing tactics. The survey results paved the way to better understand why or why don't students show up to Student Center events, follow them on social media, or come to the building at all.

My initial thought was to take the time to walk around the SIU campus to randomly select students to participate in this study. My student worker and I with 60 surveys in hand, trotted around the grounds of SIU in search of students that were simply partaking in their daily activities. We started by traveling into buildings that we knew held plentiful lounge space, trying to catch students with enough free time to take the less than five-minute questionnaire. As we were successful in doing this, we ventured over to the university library knowing that we would have access to a large number of students in a small area.

Two-thirds of the students that we asked to fill out the survey had no problem taking the time to do so, and in fact, were happy to do it. The other one-third were

reluctant to participate due to time constraints and prior engagements. After two hours of walking the campus and soliciting “random” students to contribute, my student worker and I gathered 40 surveys to kick-off the study.

The next day I decided that walking around myself and soliciting students to take the survey may not be the most time efficient way of distributing the assessment. I also took into consideration that many students recognized me just from being around campus and may remember my face from the Student Center social media platforms. This made me wonder if some students answered the questionnaire a certain way because they knew that I worked for the Student Center and they did not want to disappoint or offend me. In search of non-bias and accurate data I needed to find a more anonymous way to get the survey across campus and for the participants to feel more secure knowing that they would be unidentified after answering.

I created an account with an online surveying software called Qualtrics.com to seek out the digital audience for this assessment. I created the online survey using the exact same questions as the print copies so the overall results would not in any way be misconstrued. As the creation of the digital questionnaire took no time at all, I began to push the survey out right away. I began by posting it to my personal Facebook, Snapchat, and Twitter accounts, using the disclaimer “Hey current SIU students! Please take this quick 5-minute survey for my thesis project! You are entered to win one of two \$50 University Bookstore gift cards when you complete it! 😊 Thanks in advance!” as the caption.

On social media, I took it one step farther and got the approval from my superior to post the survey on the Student Center social media accounts including Facebook,

Twitter, and Snapchat. As this survey is about the Student Center, it only made sense to reach out to those on social media who were already following those accounts to get their feedback on why they follow and what they like or dislike about the content.

In further research, I utilized the survey at a solicitation table held in the Student Center. Those working the table asked students to fill out the survey after being sparked by sole-interest to approach the table. Analyzing the participants and table management I derived data, expressed in the Participant Observation section.

Per the reference of my supervisor, I was put in touch with the gentleman who ran the university's online course home page. This home page where all students must go to find their online assignments and information regarding final grades is more commonly referred to as Desire to Learn, or "D2L", around SIU. On D2L, the immediate thing you see once logging into your account is an announcements section which is the place where most typically job postings, event advertisements, and surveys live. This gentleman, a generous and great resource posted my survey to the announcements section. Not only this, but a notification about the survey being posted was sent to every student at the university.

Survey Results

The following is the number of surveys gathered by each technique:

In-person walking around = 40

Personal Facebook = 9

Personal Twitter = 4

Personal Snapchat = 2

Student Center Facebook = 47

Student Center Twitter = 26

Student Center Snapchat = 22

Participant Observation Tables = 24

D2L = 286

The survey went live on February 15, 2018 and was taken down on February 28, 2018. In just under two weeks, I accumulated 460 completed surveys from the avenues listed above.

There was quite a range of students who participated in this study. Only current SIU students were able to complete the survey for a chance to win one of the \$50 gift cards.

Question: What year in school are you?

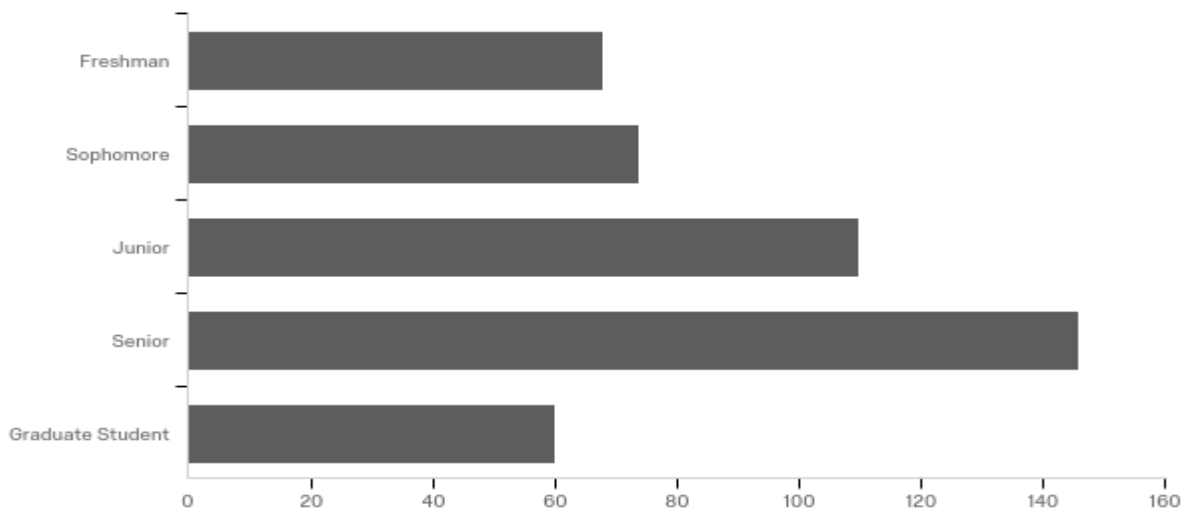


Figure 1. Year in School

In the survey, I wanted to know whether or not these students worked on campus. This particular question matters because from personal experience, working

on campus almost forces you to be more involved at school. Employees are constantly being surrounded with talk of what is happening on campus, and they tend to be more in the know.

Question: Do you work on campus?

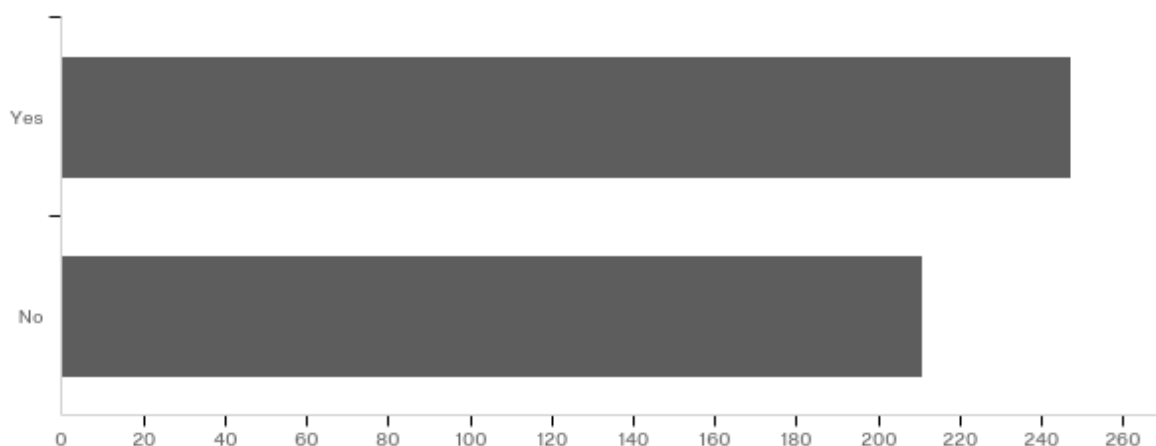


Figure 2. Working on Campus

The more you are involved on campus, the more you know what is happening and the more knowledgeable you are about your university. At SIU, we refer to student clubs as Registered Student Organizations (RSOs). I am a strong believer that the more organizations you join, the better well-rounded you become. You meet so many new people through networking and you ultimately gain familiarity of what your university has to offer. I hypothesized that the students who were more involved through student organizations, have a better experience at school because of the knowledge they gain through involvement. In the survey, 4.4% were part of 5 or more RSOs, 41% were part of 2-4 RSOs, 28.9% were involved in 1 RSO, and 25.8% were not involved in any kind of RSO. The 25.8% that were not involved at all, mentioned that they were not

registered for any extracurricular due to being an online student, not being interested in any, not having enough time due to work and class, or lack of awareness.

Being involved does not only mean being a member of a student group. It also refers to attending events held on campus. In the survey, I wanted to see how often students are showing up to events held at SIU.

Question: How often do you attend events on campus?

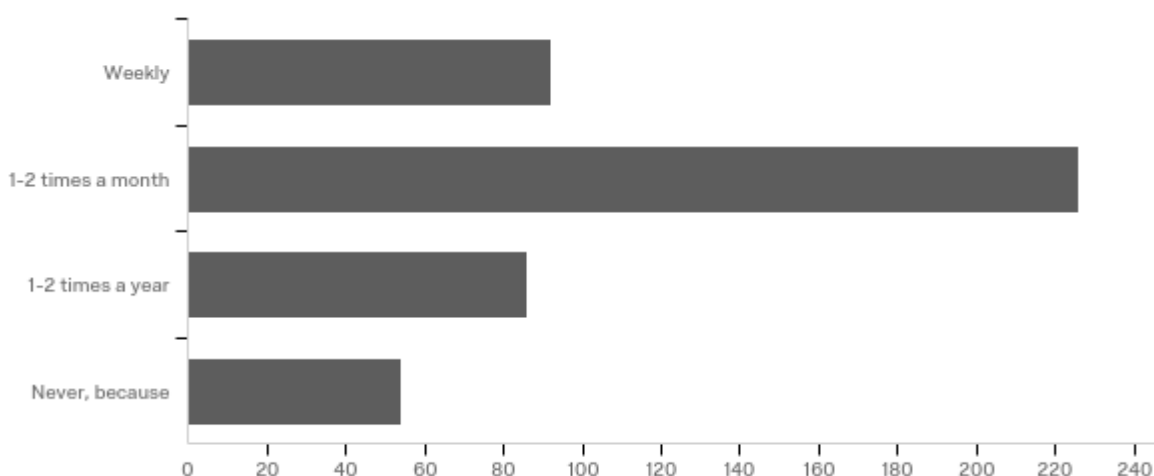


Figure 3. Events on Campus

As the turnout of students varies from event to event on campus, I really wanted to hone in on what variables depict attendance. I started to focus more specifically on their involvement with the Student Center and asked the following question regarding the specific events held within the building. 4% of the surveyors selected “other” for this question but after proper analyzation their selection could have fit into a proper category.

Question: If you are not attending Student Center events, how come? (Please choose all that apply) See Figure 4.

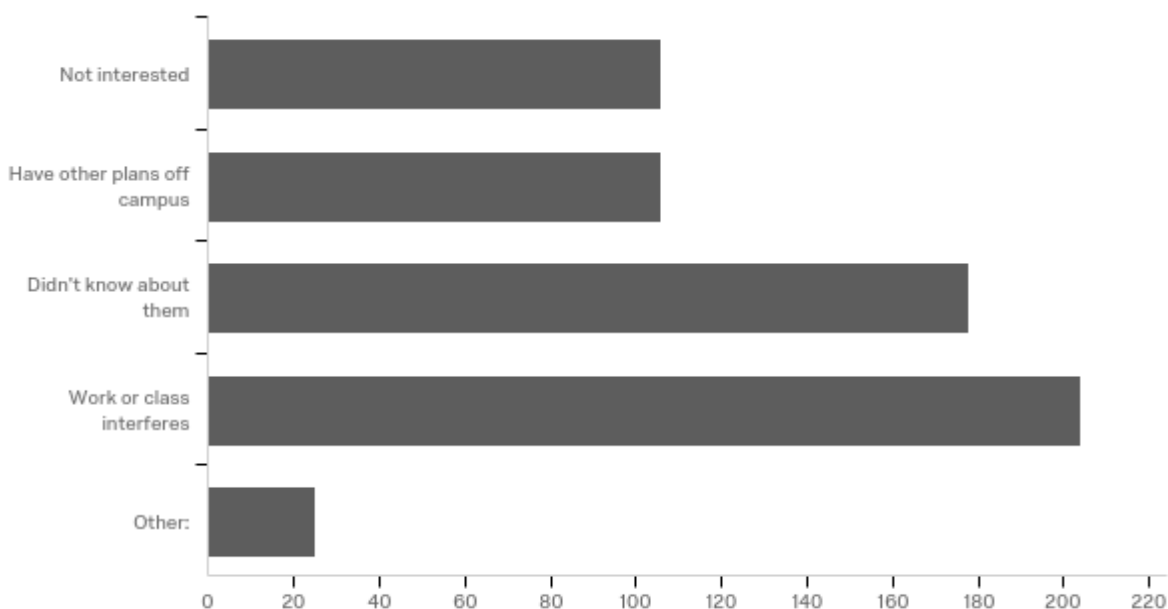


Figure 4. Student Center Events

Finding out why students do not come to events is important, but I also need to know how often they are utilizing our daily services and coming to the building. Maybe after class hours, when our events usually partake, students have other plans, didn't know about them, have work, or are simply not interested. But what about coming to the Student Center to grab some food on the way to class? Or hanging out in the Bowling & Billiards or Craft Shop? Shopping at the University Bookstore? Or maybe just finding a space to relax in-between classes? I asked the students how often they come to the Student Center and 29% said daily, 38% said 1-2 times a week, 28% said 1-2 times a month, and 5% said never. For those who answered never had reasons like they are online students, they do not come to that particular side of campus, or they feel like have no reason to because they eat at the dining halls.

So, it is obvious that some students are not aware of all of the activities, services, and offices that the Student Center has to offer. If students are answering that they do

not come to the Student Center because they eat elsewhere, then they must not be thinking about the Craft Shop, Bowling & Billiards, University Bookstore, or study areas. Is this the reason why they do not know about them? Or are these auxiliaries being looked over because of what other departments (like the Student Recreation Center, dining halls, or the Morris Library) have to offer? These reflections led me to my next questions: how are students receiving their information on campus? Why do they not realize what the Student Center has to offer? Figure 5 below shows how students are hearing about what is happening on campus. You'll see from the findings below, that students are gathering their information from all available outlets. The survey results show that students are retaining their information about what is being offered on campus from every avenue that is made available.

Question: How do you primarily get your information about what is happening on campus? (Please choose all that apply.) See Figure 5.

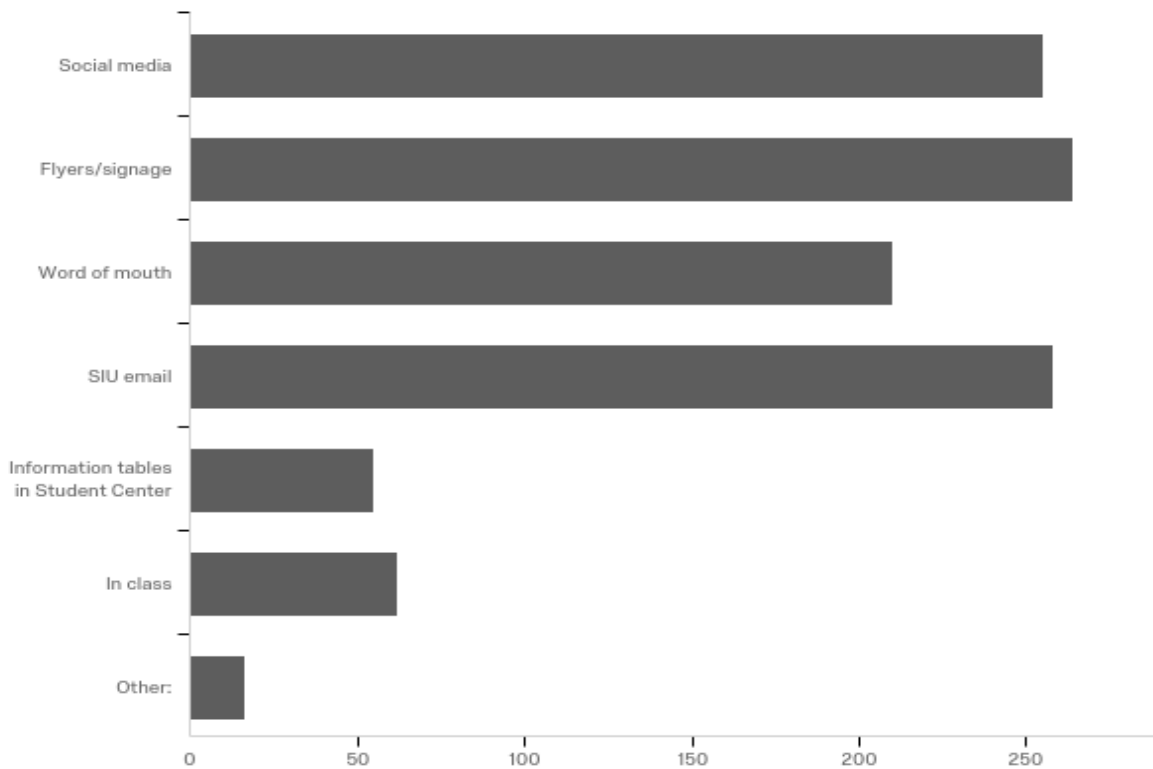


Figure 5. Information on Campus

One of the last questions of the survey was in regard to SIU as a whole, and I asked how much SIU pride the students had. The more pride you have in your university, the more you want to be involved and actually desire to learn about what it has to offer. This question was important to me because it gave me a better idea of the student as a person. Throughout the survey, if the student was saying that they were not involved in any RSOs, never come to the Student Center, are not interested in events being held, never stop at information tables to find out what is happening on campus; I could have already made the assumption that this student had very little to no SIU pride. If the university itself is not important to you, then the activities and services it has to offer won't matter to you either. This survey showed me that there are so many mixed emotions about the Student Center and SIU as a whole community. I asked

questions about the student's backgrounds, their social media preferences, whether or not they come to events in the building or on campus, how they receive the information, and how important SIU is to them to get to know our student body a bit better. My last question on the survey was "on a scale of 1 – 10, how much SIU pride do you have?" Out of the 460 students that took his survey, 37% of them answered with a 6 or less. Eight of those students had answered 1. This just tells me that, for some students, it does not matter what marketing tactics we are using. No matter how we try to reach these students, they will not care about what is happening on campus simply because they do not care about our university.

Content Analysis

For my second methodology, I conducted a content analysis. I am currently the Graduate Marketing Assistant for the SIU Student Center. One of my greatest roles in this position is being in charge and running the social media platforms for the building. During the fall semester, I have kept reports of every single social media post that has been published on our outlets. The outlets include the following platforms: Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and Snapchat. For each individual post, I have analytics to see how people have interacted with the posts in various ways. For this content analysis, I compared the content of the posts to each other within each platform, weighed the amount of reach on each platform, and measured what type of post got the most attention. My main objective was to discover which social media outlet students are most engaged with and what type of content gets the most attention on average. This methodology is important because of the relevance of modern social media usage among college students. Students feel that they need to be on social media for

gratification. Needs are “the combined product of psychological dispositions, sociological factors, and environmental conditions” (Katz, Haas, & Gurevitch, 1973, pp. 516–517) that motivate media use. Gratifications are the perceived fulfillment of a need through an activity, such as media use (Palmgreen, 1984). Naturally, by the definition of social media, social needs are perceived to be the largest force propelling individuals, especially college students who strive for acceptance, to online usage.

Content Analysis Results

For this content analysis, I took special notes of each individual post that was published on all of the Student Center social media outlets in the Fall 2017 semester, August 1 – December 15. This data included the post content, platform, day of week, total engagement, total reach, video or photo, and the exact date for each post.

Upon evaluation of the conducted research over the fall semester, the number of social media followers per platform were as follows:

Facebook = 6,510

Instagram = 1,298

Twitter = 2,609

Snapchat = 614

Overall, I wanted to see which platform was reaching the largest number of people. When we at the Student Center are trying to spread the word about a topic or event, we need to know which outlet is going to give the most awareness to our followers. I was very surprised to find out that in the fall of 2017, our Twitter account was reaching the most amount of people. As we have the most followers on our Facebook account, the Twitter algorithm for visible content is much different. Currently,

Twitter shows posts on the platform's timeline by the time it was published. Facebook has changed to a more popularity approach. As Facebook posts are no longer being published on people's timelines by time in order like Twitter, posts are actually being seen on people's timelines by the amount of interaction you have with the user's account who published the post. Instagram has recently converted to the same concept as Facebook because Facebook now owns Instagram and the two are very similar and in fact linked with one another.

The following, Figure 6, is showing how many people in total were reached for the Fall 2017 semester. Based on the total numbers of following each account has, I hypothesized that Snapchat would have the least amount of reach followed by Instagram with the second lowest number of followers. However, like mentioned above, I assumed that Facebook would have the highest amount of reach by a landslide due to its favored number of followers. See Figure 6.

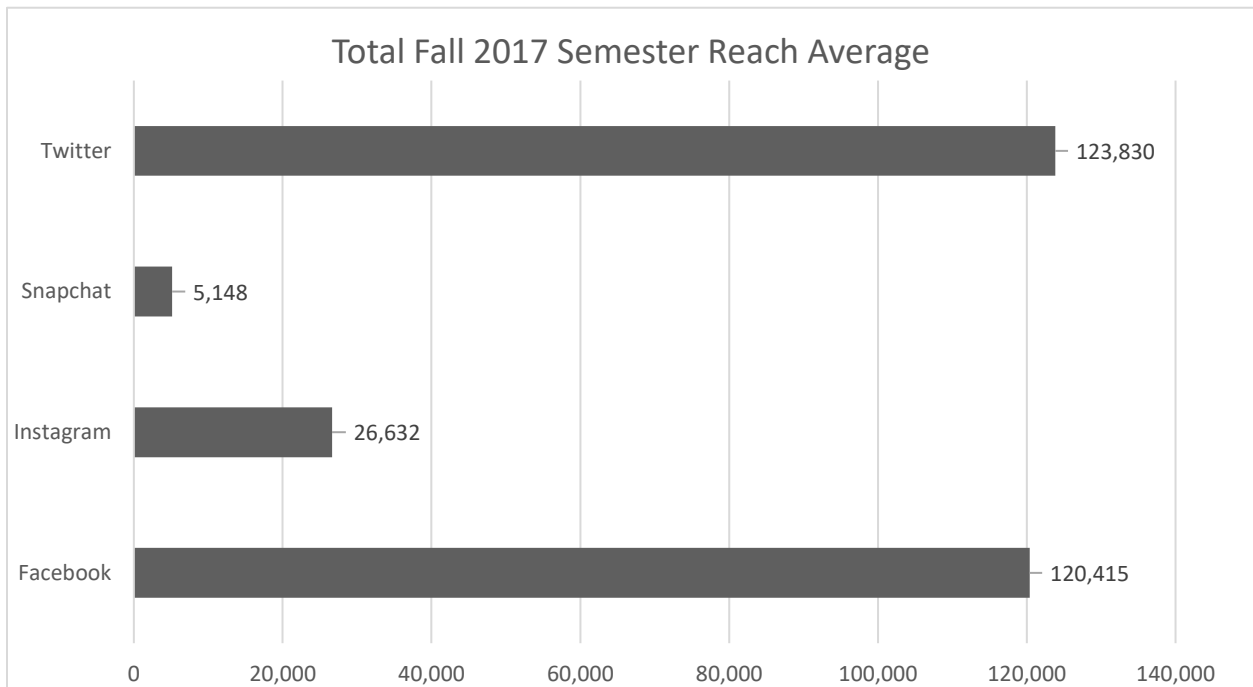


Figure 6. Semester Reach

As by definition, reach on social media is the number of unique people who saw your content. This very much differs from social media engagement, which is when people perform actions on your page. In my case, I am referring to the amount of engagement per post. Engagement could be anything from a link click, post like, post share, post retweet, quoted post share, photo or video click, profile view from clicking on post, or simply stopping on a post to view the content. The amount of engagement on our social media platforms heavily varies by platform.

As our social reach is the highest on our Twitter account, Facebook takes the crown when it comes to engagement. Facebook may not be the platform that is getting the highest amount of unique people viewing the content, but it certainly sparks the

most engagement from its viewers. In the following, Figure 7, you will see the drastic differences of engagement on the Student Center's outlets.

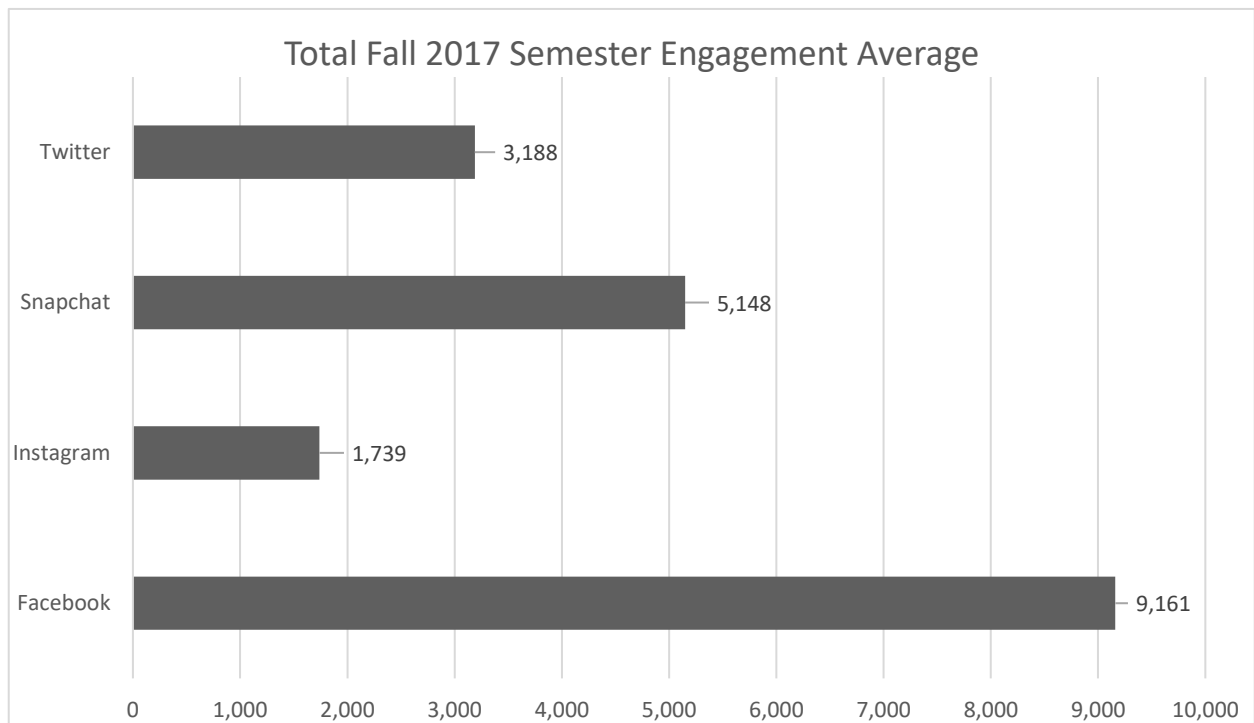


Figure 7. Semester Engagement

Next, I wanted to observe what type of post sparked the most interaction among the platforms. As the Student Center is always promoting a wide range of events, departments, and matters, we are constantly trying to think of an innovative way to market our messages whether that be through photos or videos. We post various types of content at a minimum of five times weekly on our social platforms, and every post has a graphic with it to catch the eye of the media "scroller". To most accurately measure which type of post retained the highest amount of engagement, I collected data from each of our four platforms and individually analyzed them. This way, the data would not be misconstrued overall because each of our social media platforms reaches a different

audience and the way we must post on each of them is reformed. In some cases, videos will be more popularly favored on one platform and photos will be more favorable on the next.

Personally, I love a good video. I think the work done and the design overall of a well-crafted video is impressive and I am always stopping to watch in full when I come across one. However, not everyone has the same opinion and may prefer a quick glance at a still photo when they are scrolling through their social media timelines. Being me, I hypothesized that videos would be most favored across all platforms. When I began to analyze the data, I was surprised to see that our social platforms were split in half, being that only 2 out of 4 platforms favored videos. This is not to say that videos are not appreciated on all platforms, but it is very interesting to see that some platforms simply spark more reaction to still photos.

Any time that we create a video at the Student Center, we make sure to post it on Facebook, no matter the content, because we know from experience and analytics that the videos always perform well on this platform. Our audience on Facebook is a well-balanced mix of students, alumni, faculty, staff, and community members all ranging in age and various demographics. I knew from regularly posting on Facebook that videos were always successful for us, but what I did not realize was that videos are actually almost 4 times more popular on this platform than still images. See Figure 8.

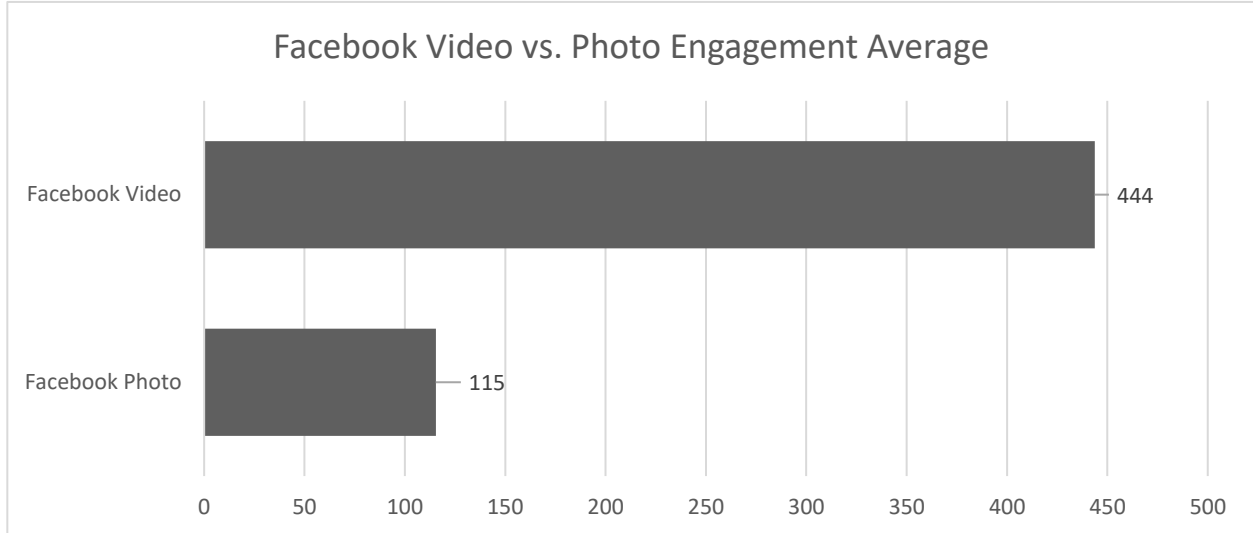


Figure 8. Facebook Video vs. Photo

Instagram videos, however, do not march to the same drum as Facebook. Though Facebook now owns the Instagram platform, their outcomes are definitely not the same. The reason being that the audience utilizing Instagram is much different from that of Facebook. Instagram has a much younger following than Facebook. As this platform is newer to the social experience than Facebook, more than half of our 1,298 followers fit into the 18-24 age category; 35% being men and 65% women. From my experience posting on Instagram, photos seem to perform better because the attention span to stop and view an entire video on this platform simply is not there. The following figure outlines the comparison of Instagram video versus photo on our Student Center account. See Figure 9.

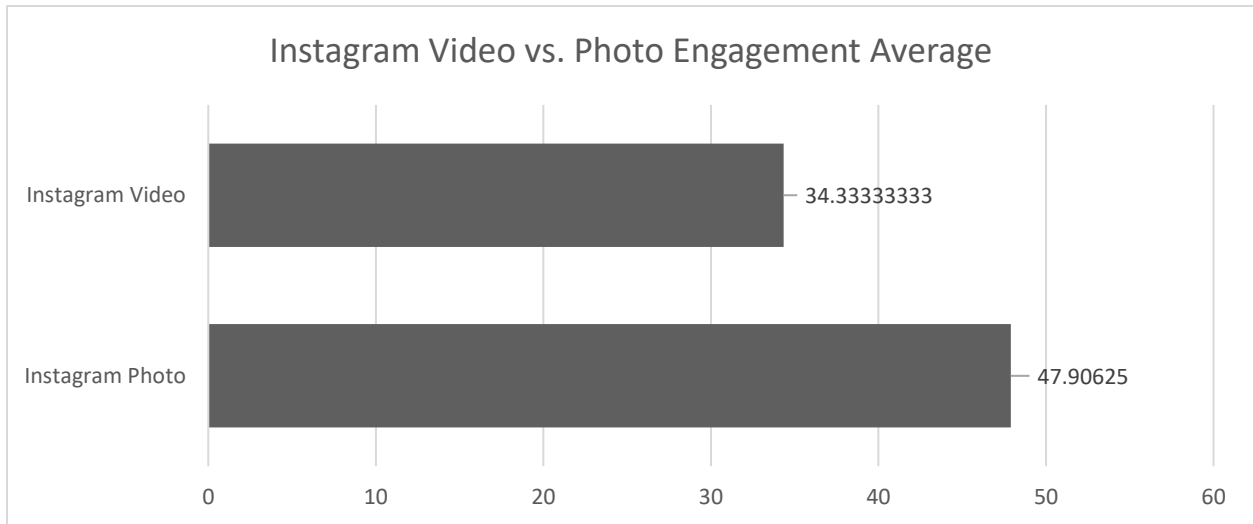


Figure 9. Instagram Video vs. Photo

Twitter was another platform where videos showed more interest than photos. Videos perform almost 5x better than photos on this platform when it comes to post engagement. The number of videos posted onto our twitter account is significantly lower than the number of photos we post resulting in data that could be easily misconstrued. To provide a more accurate display of the analytics I used an average engagement per post resulting in a landslide comparison of videos to photos.

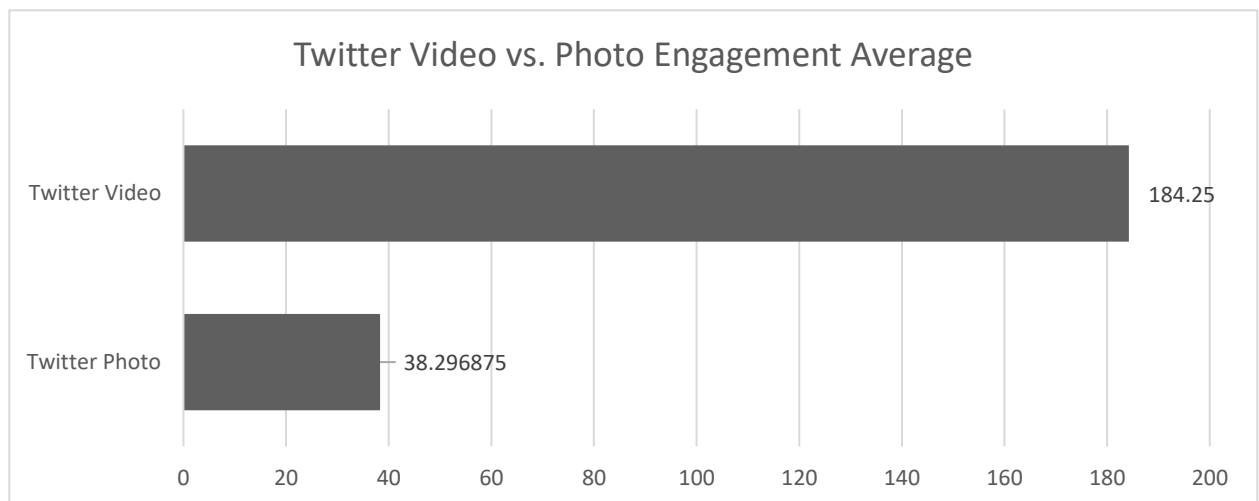


Figure 10. Twitter Video vs. Photo

Snapchat is the Student Center's oddball platform. We typically choose to post photos over videos on our other three outlets (due to convenience and supply), and Snapchat is an entirely different ballgame. Snapchat to us is about giving experience. We do not post on our Snapchat account professionally, but rather from the student's point of view. All content on Snapchat is original and authentic with our student workers being the sole proprietors of this outlet. We find that our viewers, who are 9/10 times a student, prefer to hear about what is happening at the Student Center from a student's point of view. The whole point of Snapchat, to us, is to give a behind-the-scenes feel to our viewers and make them feel like they are exclusive friends of the Student Center. This platform is all about FUN, and with this being said, similar to Instagram, most of our followers do not have the attention span to sit and watch entire videos on this platform. We are happy when our audience watches at least 50% of our "Snapchat story". However, video and photo are pretty close in average on this platform. This is why our student employees like to give a nice mix of both videos and photos for students to view.

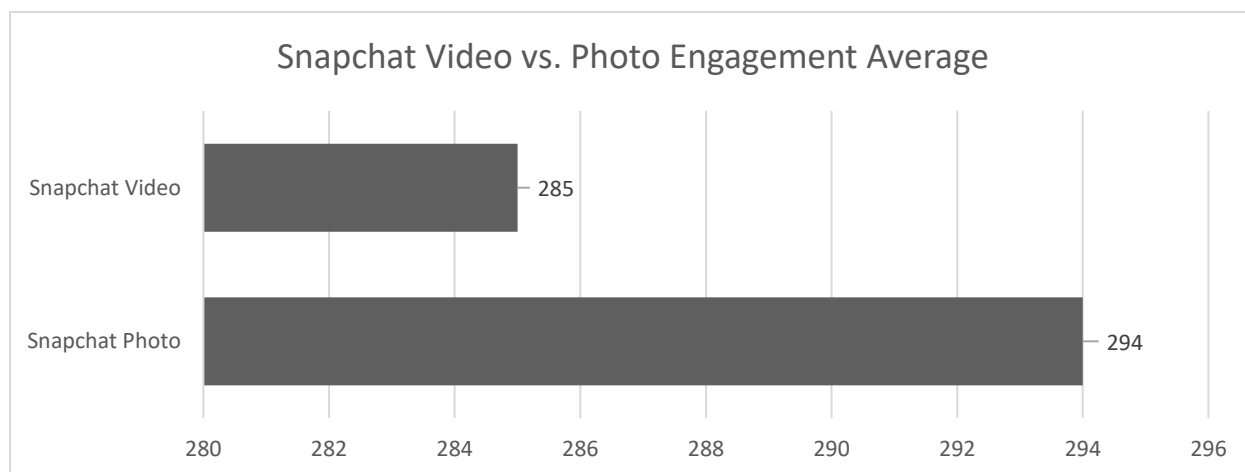


Figure 11. Snapchat Video vs. Photo

Participant Observation

My third methodology used was experimentation by participant observation. At the Student Center, our marketing department is set up on the first floor of the building catching passersby at solicitation tables in designated spots on a weekly basis. More often than not, at least one member of our marketing staff is handling a table in the building from 11am-1pm multiple times a week. Therefore, we have had many opportunities to study how students engage with the people manning these tables and what types of content gets student attention. Taking the time to observe how students react to marketing efforts as an eyewitness allowed me to understand what works and what does not. I wanted to see how students react when fellow students are the ones in the role of the solicitor doing the marketing verses staff putting forth the efforts.

Participant Observation Results

When I was an undergraduate student at Southern Illinois University, I took a research class that dabbled on the solicitation table topic a bit. We as a class spread our desks around the room to make a large circle to discuss the topic as a whole. As our professor was asking us which we preferred, to approach a student or staff marketer, the class almost entirely responded that they would feel more comfortable approaching a student worker. Their reasoning at the time made sense. They felt as if students were more approachable, more on their level of understanding, and that they would not make them feel pressured to do something out of their comfort zone.

I observed both my student worker and my supervisor manning the same solicitation table for one hour each. They both had tables set up on a Thursday from 11am-12pm. Ironically enough, there happened to be a high school conference on both

days that the study was conducted, meaning that traffic in the building was a bit different than most days. Both my supervisor and student worker had objectives of having students fill out the Student Center Engagement Survey and giving information about Debit Dawg Rewards (the rewards program on the student I.D.). Each table had skittles and student center “goodies” spread throughout to attract students and get them to approach the table.

My supervisor was dressed professionally and had worked tables such as this one countless times. She stood at the front left corner of the table, smiling and saying hello to passersby. Unfortunately, throughout the hour, 7 out of 10 people on average walking by were on their phones and totally disengaging from my supervisor and her table. Students tended to shy away from Beth’s table because it almost appeared to them as if she were trying to sell them something, or get them to sign up for something they were uninterested in. The only reasons students seemed to stop and chat with my supervisor were because she was being very friendly and engaging while also having goodies on the table.

My student worker was dressed more casually and was not as experienced with tables as my supervisor. However, she was familiar with the content and knew what she was talking about. Like my supervisor, my student worker stood to the left front corner of the table and greeted the people walking by. The individuals walking by had the same mentalities as the passersby when my supervisor was working the table. While most students were on their phones and having their headphones in their ears, you could tell they were trying to avoid making any contact with the table while they were walking by. My student worker is very involved on campus, so in her case she knew many students

that were passing by. Because she knew so many people, she grasped their attention and convinced them to participate in the survey.

So overall, who was more successful? Both my supervisor and student worker effectively collected 12 surveys in one hour's time. My supervisor had the advantage of personally knowing fellow faculty and staff walking through, as my student worker personally knew many fellow students coming in the building. My supervisor was able to explain the survey better to students, swaying them to participate in the survey, as my student worker gained survey participants by personally knowing them. They both produced the same number of surveys but by using two different approaches.

There are positives and negatives to having a staff member work the table. They are more knowledgeable about the content, they take the job more seriously and try to gain better results, and are more professional and will be taken more seriously by students. However, staff members are not as approachable as a student worker would be. Students feel as if they can relate to other students on a more personal level, swaying them to participate in what is going on at the table. Students seem to engage more when a fellow student is the one giving the information because the correct lingo is there. My student worker knew how to talk to other students about things unrelated to the table, eventually turning the conversation topic into what is being marketed.

No matter who is working the table, it is hard to get students to stop and do anything for more than a few seconds. The usual responses from students are that they are on their way to class, only coming into the building to grab food, or they simply are not interested in what the table is offering or discussing. Doing things like being friendly and engaging, staying off of your cellphone, standing instead of sitting, and having

something on the table (like snacks or freebies) will all help gain the attention of students and get more interaction at your table.

CHAPTER 5:

COMPARATIVE RESEARCH

Mid-January 2018, I traveled to Northwestern University in Evanston, IL. For one full day, I conducted interviews with the marketing staff there to compare and contrast their marketing tactics of their student unions with Southern Illinois University's. One immediate contrast to be made being that there is one full marketing staff that markets all of Northwestern University. At SIU, there are many different marketing teams focusing on their own departments. So, for me, who markets the SIU Student Center and is mainly only focused on our building affairs, Northwestern uses their one Student Affairs marketing office team to market the entire school and just happen to be housed in their student union.

I first met with Northwestern's Director of Marketing. He introduced me to his student staff and presented me with the dynamic of how their team functions. As I planned on discussing specific marketing techniques of their student union and how they are focusing on gaining traffic in that building, our conversations pertained mostly to how they try to only market their student union once-in-a-while. With such a small staff for an entire university, it is understandable that they are not focusing on their student union every day in their social media.

I was quick to learn that because their team has to focus on their entire campus rather than just one specific building, our marketing techniques were going to be very different. Not only this, but Northwestern's marketing had to be different based on the structure of their school. Not only is Northwestern a larger university than SIU, the

student body is an entirely different demographic. It is not outlandish for me to say that Northwestern is a more prestigious, defined, sophisticated school.

After having great conversation with the marketing team, both professional and student staff, I then proceeded to meet with the Associate Vice President for Auxiliary Services. Ironically enough, the woman who is currently in this position is a former Southern Illinois University employee and worked in the SIU Student Center as the Director of the building. She had amazing insight to the differences between SIU and Northwestern simply because she has lived and breathed both atmospheres and knows how each operate. The greatest note I took away from her was that the differences between the two schools does not matter at the end of the day. It is not about who has better turnouts for events or more engagement with their marketing efforts. At the end of the day, it is about helping each other to better market to the niche at your own school. I came to Northwestern to brainstorm and retain more ideas on how to market SIU, but I came out learning that my own marketing staff and I are doing all we can to market the SIU Student Center. Northwestern may have a better turnout to events than SIU, and they may not. Both schools had fantastic marketing techniques to offer that the other school was not already utilizing and are now going to try and implement. However, both schools were also using tactics that would not necessarily work at the other school. The difference is the atmosphere. What truly makes marketing efforts successful at universities is listening to the needs of the campus' community and catering to them versus trying to implement all marketing techniques and getting little return. Find your niche and perfect it rather than spreading your efforts too thin.

CHAPTER 6:

CONCLUSION

Marketing to students is an important task of all universities. It is crucial to study how students gain their information and what their interests are. Student affairs should be focusing on the students. Keeping up with the latest trends, making the conversation be about the students and making them feel special, and encouraging them to be better versions of themselves is vital. Millennials are a skeptical generation, they can tell when they are being sold something and they are not easily persuaded. Making a genuine effort to market events, departments, services, etc. is appreciated on university campuses. Focusing on a few marketing techniques and perfecting them is what works at universities. As colleges are the right places to be experimental, you also don't want to confuse the students with inconsistency. For example, when you place your marketing materials in the same place every time you're trying to promote something, people will know to look for information there every time. If you are switching your marketing techniques all the time, people (especially students) tend to miss things because the information was not in the same location as it once was before. Being fresh and innovative is important also, so every once in a while, using an experimental marketing tactic is not discouraged. Just be sure that you're still posting your information in your regular location while adding the new marketing method into the mix. With this being said, sometimes it's alright to toss techniques that are no longer as effective as they used to be. However, if something is not broken, why fix it?

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APPENDICES

Appendix A – Survey

Student Center Engagement Survey

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to analyze how SIU students act upon the marketing initiatives of the SIU Student Center. This survey is being conducted for research purposes only. You will remain anonymous.

Instructions

Please, to the best of your ability, answer the following questions honestly.

Question 1: What year in school are you?

Freshman

Sophomore

Junior

Senior

Graduate Student

Question 2: Do you work on campus?

Yes

No

Question 3: Where do you live?

On campus housing

Off campus in Carbondale

I am a commuter

Question 4: How many Registered Student Organizations are you involved in?

5+

2-4

1

None, because:

Question 5: How often do you attend events on campus?

All the time

1-2 times a month

1-2 times a year

Never, because:

Question 6: If you are not attending Student Center events, how come?

Not interested

Have other plans off campus

Didn't know about them

Work or class interferes

Other:

Question 7: How often do you come to the Student Center?

Daily

1-2 times a week

1-2 times a month

Never, because:

Question 8: What social media platform do you find yourself using the most?

Facebook

Twitter

Instagram

Snapchat

Other:

Question 9: Which Student Center social media platforms do you follow? (Circle all that apply.)

Facebook

Twitter

Instagram

Snapchat

None, because:

Question 10: How do you primarily get your information about what is happening on campus? (Circle all that apply.)

Social media

SIU email

Flyers/signage

Information tables in Student Center

Word of mouth

In class

Other:

Question 11: Do you usually stop at information tables when you see them in the Student Center?

Yes, because:

No, because:

Question 12: How would you describe the Student Center to a friend?

Question 13: What would you improve about the Student Center if you could?

Question 14: What do you like most about the Student Center?

Question 15: Have you utilized the Bowling & Billiards in the past semester? If no, why?

Question 16: Any other comments about the SIU Student Center:

Question 17: On a scale of 1-10, how much SIU pride do you have? (Please circle one.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
9 10

Appendix B – Content Analysis Links

https://www.facebook.com/SIUStudentCenter/?ref=aymt_homepage_panel

<https://twitter.com/SIUStudentCen>

<https://www.instagram.com/siustudentcenter/>

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