

VIRTUALLY PERFECT: IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT AND IDENTITY MANIPULATION ON FACEBOOK



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Introduction



- The impression one makes on others determines how they will be perceived among the members in their community.
- “Impression management” is a concept introduced by Erving Goffman. It highlights the ways in which people in the company of others strive to present an image of themselves in particular ways.
- Facebook is a social networking site that has created a forum where individuals are able to manage their virtual impressions through their identity constructs.

Research Questions



- How do Saintmary's College students use "impression management" and what are their motivations behind "impression management" on Facebook?
- How do Saintmary's College students "friends" on Facebook interfere with their "impression management?" and how does it effect their impressions?

Thesis

Through impression management and identity manipulation, the culture of Facebook use is demonstrated by college-aged women living in residence halls at Saintmary's College.



Literature Review



- Impression Management and Motivations
 - Rosenbloom (2008)
 - Siibak (2009)
 - Lampe, Ellison, and Steirnfield (2006)
 - Dimiccio and Millen (2007)
 - Zhao, Grasmuck, Martin (2008)

Literature Review

- Disturbance in impression management and its effects on relationships
 - Ginger (2008)
 - Muise, Christofides and Desmarais (2008)
 - Walther, Heide, Kim, Westerman, and Tong (2008)
 - Joison (2008)
 - Murgittroy, Whiteside, Yee, Gross and Kaczmarek (2006)



Theory

Erving Goffman Impression Management

- Goffman (1955)
 - "Face"
 - Community
 - "Scenes"
- Goffman (1956)
 - Norms of society
 - Creation of impressions to conform





Methodology:

Survey (24 Questions)

Broken down into three sections

•Section One:

- Demographics
- Identity manipulations (photos/information)

•Section Two:

- Information /Photo Screening
- Personal Relationships
- Motivations

•Section Three:

- Facebook use

Methodology Continued

Participants

- 53 Saintmary's College Women
- College- age (our generation)
- Attend Saintmary's College
- Live in the Saintmary's residence halls

Demographical Regions

Question	Midwest	South East	South West	North East	West
Region	33 (62.3%)	7 (13.2%)	6 (11.3%)	5 (9.4%)	2 (3.8%)

Methodology Continued



Research Methods

- The surveys were distributed around all four Saintmary's College dorms
- To avoid biases, the surveys were distributed by an alternate person to prevent any face-to-face interactions between the participants and the researcher
- Since the distributor chose which floors to distribute the surveys to, this is a selective sample
- The distributor told the participants she would be back to collect their surveys by a specific time and also to place their surveys outside their door after their surveys were completed
- Once the distributor had collected the surveys they were given to the researcher

Methodology Continued

Reasons for Methods

- Surveys were chosen to use due to the personal nature of the study.
- The survey method gave the participants an opportunity to disclose more personal information without a sense of judgment by the researcher
- Hard copy surveys were used rather than Survey Monkey to make the study more personable by some interaction between the distributor and the participants
- Hard copy surveys were also used over Survey Monkey in efforts to regulate the time each participant spent on the survey
 - (It is very easy for participants to quickly choose answers online without reading the questions rather than spending time writing out their answers or physically circling the answers)

Disadvantages/ Advantages of this study

Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>Specific:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Shows the motivations Saintmary's college women have behind their impression management on Facebook.•How Saint Mary's College women construct their Facebook identities. <p>Broad:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•An essential contribution to larger studies to show that our society has made Facebook a social expectation amongst the college-aged generation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•The participants needed to have Facebooks in order to participate which eliminated the students who did not have Facebooks.•There was no incentive to take the survey such as extra credit, which reduced the intended sample size.•The participants were limited to the residents halls which eliminated any of the students who lived off campus•If this study was repeated, more demographical variables such as: race/ethnicity, age, and class would have provided more detailed findings.

Findings

Table 1: Impression Management and Identity Manipulation

Question	Always	Sometimes	Never
Alter or enhance photos	7 (13.2%)	20 (37.7%)	26 (49.1%)
	27 (50.9%)		
Manipulate or screen information	14 (26.4%)	32 (60.4%)	7 (13.2%)
	46 (86.8%)		

Table 2: Motivation (1)

Question	Always	Sometimes	Never
Considers what opposite sex will think when posting photos/information on profile	33 (62.3%)	17 (32.1%)	3 (5.7%)
	50 (94.3%)		
Nervous of what "friends" post based on what others may think of identity	27 (50.9%)	20 (37.7%)	6 (11.3%)
	47 (88.6%)		

Findings continued

Table 3: Motivation (2)

Question	Yes	No
Participants feel profile is accurate to whom they are in person	42 (79.2%)	11 (20.8%)
Social pressures at Saint Mary's College to have a certain image	22 (41.5%)	31 (58.5%)

Table 4: Effects of disturbance in impression management

Partners displaying jealousy of participant's profile from ambiguous information	32 (60.4%)	21 (39.6%)
Participants displaying jealousy of partner's profile from ambiguous information	42 (79.2%)	10 (18.9%)

Discussion



Information

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Photos

- May indicate that written information on their profiles is more reflective of their character or true life identities than what photos may depict.

Opposite Sex > Nervousness > Accuracy to real life identities

- Almost all of the participants indicated that they keep the opposite sex in mind as a motivation when choosing what pictures and information to incorporate into their Facebook profiles.
- The participants nervousness towards what their "friends" may post on their pages due to others judgements, indicates their second strongest motivation to monitor and screen their profiles in hopes of securing their impressions.
- Most of the participants felt their Facebook profiles were accurate to their real life identities. Any outside information posted that is inaccurate to whom they are in person may interfere with their desired impressions.

Discussion continued



- “Friends” have the power to interfere with a profile owner’s Facebook page based on the information they choose to post.
- The participants indicated that both they and their partners had experienced jealousy on Facebook due to ambiguous information posted by “friends.”
- Since others posted unwanted information without the permission of the Facebook owner, that information interfered with their impression management causing unwanted impressions of themselves by their partners.
- All the steps and motivations Facebook users take to maintain their impressions, certain disruptions such as outside information and pictures can threaten their “face.” (Goffman 1955)

Discussion Continued



For the future:

- Different regions
- Other universities

Larger Samples:

- More qualitative results
- More motivations
- Other impression management strategies

Thank you

- Are there any questions?

