

THESIS

ARE THEY LISTENING TO US? A COMPARISON OF STUDENT RESPONSES TO
TRADITIONAL VS. USER-GENERATED MARKETING CONTENT

Submitted by

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ABSTRACT

ARE THEY LISTENING TO US? A COMPARISON OF STUDENT RESPONSES TO TRADITIONAL VS. USER-GENERATED MARKETING CONTENT

Marketers for university housing departments use a variety of traditional and digital tools to promote positive attitudes and interest among prospective student residents. This study used one-on-one semi-structured qualitative in-depth interviews to explore perceptions and reactions of ten first-year students at Colorado State University. Students were shown two examples of traditional marketer-generated content, including a printed Housing Guide publication that all admitted first-year students receive by mail and a video on Housing & Dining Services' website that features a student-guided tour of one of the residence halls on campus. Participants also reviewed a user-generated YouTube video featuring the same residence hall and the CSU Rams Class of 2017 Facebook group page that includes 3,000+ members. Marketer-generated materials resulted in positive attitudes and a greater sense of credibility, while the user-generated video and Facebook group page were not considered credible by as many of the participants. While students were not averse to using user-generated content online to form opinions and make decisions, they displayed more hesitation at trusting information found online versus information shared within their networks of peers or personal contacts. The results suggest that university-produced materials, particularly the housing department's comprehensive printed publication, continue to play a vital role in a university's promotional efforts, despite the widespread contention that students prefer to obtain information online and rely heavily on user-generated content. The study provides seven recommendations for future marketing efforts based on the students' preferences.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW OF THE PROBLEM

As college students become more media savvy, college and university communications and marketing professionals must come up with innovative ways to target their audiences and speak to them “where they are.” In many cases, this means finding ways to utilize online social media tools and user-generated content (UGC) to the marketer’s advantage. Research has shown that universities are behind the curve of the rest of the World Wide Web when it comes to introducing dialogic technologies such as chats, blogs, portals, podcasts, and Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds on their websites (Gordon & Berhow, 2009). College students are using these tools on a regular basis. As described by Berthon, Pitt, and DesAutels (2011), social networks are *sine qua non* to Generation Y—they are a huge part of the generation’s society and culture; they are second nature. Universities must realize the potential these technologies have for connecting with their audiences. Students are talking to one another; the question is—are they listening to us (the communications professionals)?

Blackshaw (2011) argues that “Armed with a new suite of tools, resources, and technologies—from Facebook and Twitter to blogs and communities—consumers are no longer passive observers in today’s marketplace of ideas and commerce; they are actually defining and shaping the business landscape and marketplace of tomorrow” (p. 109). Users are continuously creating content on the Web through their use of resources such as Wikipedia, Facebook, blogs, review sites, and forums. As college students utilize these tools to communicate with one another, they have a great opportunity to share their ideas and opinions in their decision-making processes related to which school they plan to attend, where they will live, and how credible they

perceive marketing messages to be. As users, they have the ability to bypass traditional forms of marketing and go to one another as the source.

This study aimed to compare traditional marketing content (created by professionals from the institution) to UGC (created by students for students) to determine how users perceive information pertaining to their first-year university housing decisions.

RATIONALE

University marketing professionals must take into account the multitude of choices and messages that students must consider in their decision-making processes. By addressing what resources students use as their primary means of seeking information, university marketing professionals can gain a better sense of how to target messages to their audiences and what venues they should be using to ensure accurate information is communicated to students. College students are continuously emerged in an environment in which sharing information is paramount; the challenge for marketing professionals is to become aware of the ways in which students share information and become a part of the process.

This study aimed at gaining a sense of whether college students perceive messages coming from their peers as more interesting and credible than messages coming from the source: in this case, a university housing department.

Many factors contribute to the choices students make regarding their university housing arrangements. For example, at Colorado State University, all first-year students are required to live on campus. Students have the ability to choose which hall they will live in, who they will live with, and which dining plan they prefer, among other choices (Housing & Dining Services, 2013). This study aimed at gaining an understanding of the effectiveness of marketing materials

in the students' decision-making processes, and where they gather their information. Prior attitudes toward specific media types and tech savviness/level of media usage will also be examined.

POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION

By addressing what resources students use as their primary means of seeking information, university marketing professionals can gain a better sense of how to target messages to their audiences and what venues they should be using to ensure accurate information is communicated to students. The study provides insight into students' decision-making processes for other marketing professionals.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Five key concepts were identified as pertinent in developing the theoretical background of the study and providing a framework for understanding the findings discussed in Chapter 4. These five concepts include marketing, user-generated content, generational theory, message control vs. credibility, and the behavioral effects of attitude and interest. Each of these concepts is addressed in the following literature review.

MARKETING

According to the American Marketing Association (2012), “marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large” (para. 2).

Traditional marketing is all about message control and reach (Hanna, Rohm, & Crittenden, 2011). Marketers often use controlled media, such as brochures or other communications tools, to reach broad audiences (Hallahan, 2010). In the case of university marketing, most major institutions follow a set of branding guidelines that are meant to create a sense of consistency throughout the institution. For instance, at Colorado State University, a “Communicator’s Toolbox” is available to give communicators a set of guidelines for how to create consistent messaging (Colorado State University, 2011). As stated in the toolbox, found on the Graphic Standards website,

“By consistently incorporating Colorado State University brand messages in our communications – through print and online marketing materials, our actions, and our outreach – we continue to improve the status and reputation of the University, showing the public that we do, in fact, deliver what we promise” (Colorado State University, 2011, p. 5).

The toolbox also mentions that by using a consistent approach in marketing materials, stakeholders feel a sense of familiarity and confidence, which result in increased credibility for the university (Colorado State University, 2011).

In the case of controlled media, the messages are intended to engage audiences by providing detailed, documented promotional information (Hallahan, 2010). The valence of these materials is almost universally positive without being overly exaggerative. Publications coming from the university housing department, for example, show the features and benefits of living on campus and serve as an important tool to reinforce and confirm the student's decision to attend the university. These materials assist in the knowledge, persuasion, decision, and confirmation stages of Rogers' (2003) innovation-decision process. In the case of the housing materials, the content is intended to be more informational than promotional – the information is coming directly from the source, so users can rely on its accuracy and detail. It is not necessarily intended to be viewed in the classic advertising approach.

As online tools become more prevalent, marketers must learn to balance the use of controlled media while incorporating interactive media into the mix. Marketers must now focus not only on capturing their customers, but also on continuing their attention through engagement. Consumers want to be participants. According to Hanna et al. (2011), this involves finding “new approaches to media strategy, involving media that do not simply replace traditional media, but rather expand media choices so as to capture reach, intimacy, and engagement” (p. 267).

Marketers must engage their consumers in dialogue (Hanna et al., 2011).

du Plessis (2010) includes many platforms in her list of social media marketing communication tools. These tools are intended to be used by marketers to engage consumers with an organization's brand. Some of the tools include blogs, message boards, podcasts, vlogs,

wikis, RSS feeds, widgets, fan pages, games, video advertisements, social media press releases, social media aggregators, and mobile platforms. These tools assist in building community, building brand or product publicity, and encouraging customer conversation, among other features (du Plessis, 2010). An important distinction is that these tools are not meant to merely push marketers' messages out, but rather, are meant to engage consumers in a conversation with the marketers. Marketing professionals that can tap into the potential of these tools to engage their customers are using what Li and Bernoff (2011) refer to as "groundswell thinking." By listening to customers and energizing the ones who have the potential to create content, companies can gain an edge over competitors and create a larger base of invested fans who glean information from each other. "The people formerly known as the audience" (Rosen, 2006, para. 1) have become both recipients and producers (generators) of marketing messages.

USER-GENERATED CONTENT

Users and consumers have a voice when it comes to marketing. No longer is traditional marketing effective in which marketers "shout" at consumers through advertising and consumers follow a structured pattern until they make purchases (Li & Bernoff, 2011). The conversation has become an essential factor. People want to be participants; people want to hear what others have to say before making their decisions.

In 2006, *Time Magazine* named "you" as its Person of the Year. Time writer Lev Grossman (2006) attributed the designation to the year being a story of community and collaboration, a story "about the many wresting power from the few and helping one another for nothing and how that will not only change the world, but also change the way the world changes" (para. 3). He goes on to attribute the title to the revolution of Web 2.0, the

technologies that make it up, and most importantly, the people that make it all happen—the users that create the content on the World Wide Web. In the seven plus years since that time, users have continued to change the world through their means of communicating with those around them and the organizations they interact with. Not only has UGC created a shift in the mindset of web users all over the world, but it has also had a huge impact on how markets and organizations operate.

UGC has allowed interactive consumers to become a “driver in the virtual marketing communications field” (Uzunoğlu, 2011, p. 139). Marketers must now pay closer attention to consumers and their activities in social media platforms. The popularity of social media and websites driven by UGC has increased, which has changed the way marketers advertise their brands and products (Uzunoğlu, 2011). Indeed, audiences are enlisted as citizen marketers and product evangelists (McConnell & Huba, 2007a, b).

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) classifies UGC as a part of the “participative web” which allows users to create, express themselves, and communicate (OECD, 2007, p. 9). The OECD (2007) outlines three characteristics that are necessary for content to be classified as UGC: first, the content must be published on the web, either on a publicly accessible website or a social networking site accessible to a specific group; second, UGC requires an amount of creative effort; for example, a user can adapt an existing work or construct a new work, but may not just repost something that has already been created; and finally, UGC must be created outside of professional routines and practices. Countless outlets exist on the World Wide Web for content creation by users; marketers need to be aware of these outlets and find ways to use the information generated in meaningful ways that can benefit their brands or products.

An essential contributing factor to the success of UGC is electronic word of mouth (eWOM). Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, and Gremler (2004) define eWOM as “any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet” (p. 39). Many forms of UGC serve as venues for eWOM to spread. Whether consumers are specifically visiting a review site to post or gather information about a product or coming across information indirectly through visiting a forum or fan page that facilitates UGC, there are an infinite number of ways in which UGC can impact a users’ perception of a brand or product. eWOM is effective; companies and universities need to learn how to use it in a beneficial way.

In 2010, Bronner and de Hoog conducted a study with the goal of determining the role of eWOM information (consumer-generated information) as compared with commercial marketer-generated information and advertising in consumers’ decision-making processes. Their main question was to determine if consumer-generated websites served as substitutes for marketer-generated websites, or if their roles were complementary (Bronner & de Hoog, 2010). Their study found that each type of site stresses different information, and that users searching within a variety of domains (e.g. vacation planning, shopping, cooking, lifestyle) are likely to use both types of sites to make decisions. Although negative posts were not as common as positive posts, Bronner and de Hoog (2010) aptly pointed out that negative posts can have a large impact on a brand, so marketers must pay close attention to content generated on UGC sites. While their study did not specifically address university websites, they found that service-based sites are likely to be used in conjunction with consumer-generated content, and therefore, university marketing professionals should pay close attention to what their student audiences are sharing on social media sites.

Three-quarters of Generation Y members (also known as Millennials) have created profiles on social networking sites, and technology is viewed as the most distinguishing factor of their generation (Pew Research Center, 2010). Young consumers live in a connected world and want to be interacted with in a meaningful manner by marketing professionals (McCrea, 2011). Brian Wong, the founder and CEO of San-Francisco based Kiip, and a Millennial himself, is quoted in McCrea (2011) about how Millennial consumers are utilizing their social networks to make decisions about brands:

“[T]he fact is, the first thing we’re going to do is search for the brand on Google, and then use social networking to see what our friends have to say about it. If there’s something negative floating around out there on Google or Facebook, we’ll move on to the next choice” (p. 36).

eWOM is becoming more prevalent as young consumers look to their networks to find information about potential purchases or consumer choices. Marketers must be careful to recognize that information found online is going to make an impact on how their customers perceive their products or services.

GENERATIONAL THEORY: MARKETING TO MILLENNIALS (GENERATION Y)

Generation Y is made up of young people in their teens, twenties, and early thirties. Authors vary the range of this demographic from those born as early as 1977 to as late as 2001 (Aquino, 2012; Lancaster & Stillman, 2010; Weidauer, 2012; Young & Hinesly, 2012). Generation Y represents over 27 percent of the U.S. population, with over 80 million members (Dodd & Campbell, 2011). This generation also represents the most racially and ethnically diverse generation the United States has ever seen, and is on track to become the most educated (Pew Research Center, 2010).

Generational theory posits that each generation has its own biography and is shaped by peer personalities developed by how the generation's members interact with members from other generations (Coomes & DeBard, 2004). Generational types are cyclical, affected by the generation that precedes them; for instance, the idealist Baby Boomers were followed by the reactive Generation X, whose members tended to be more individualistic, and the dominant Generation Y Millennials after them are more peer-oriented and high-achieving, counter to the members of Generation X (Coomes & DeBard, 2004).

An interesting distinction in the study of college students is that the current student demographic, classified within Generation Y, makes up the “digital native” population—those who have “never known a world without computers, the Internet, or ubiquitous and instantaneous communications and thus expect instant gratification and participation in all aspects of life” (Berthon et al. 2011, pp. 1046-1047). Instant gratification is an important factor to consider in college students' decision-making behaviors; because these students have grown up in a world where information is available 24/7, they may not be as willing to wait for a response or search for information from an institutional source when their peers are readily available. These students “are not passive observers but active constructors of their online worlds—and their online and offline worlds are increasingly defined through social network services” (Berthon et al. 2011, p. 1047). As stated by McCrea (2011), “The millennial generation is the first in history to regard behaviors like Tweeting and texting, along with websites like Facebook, YouTube, Google and Wikipedia, not as astonishing innovations of the digital era, but as everyday parts of their social lives and their search for understanding” (pp. 34-35).

Many characteristics describe the Generation Y demographic, a generation that has grown up approaching technology and their social world differently than their predecessors. As

described by Lancaster and Stillman (2010), several characteristics make up what is termed as the “M-Factor” (the Millennial Factor) (p. 6). These characteristics include the importance of parenting, a sense of entitlement, making meaning, having great expectations, the need for speed, involvement in social networking, and collaboration. To summarize, Millennials have closer relationships with their parents, who are involved in more decisions than with previous generations; they have high expectations of themselves and their value and often act entitled from growing up in an era where self esteem was promoted; they want to do something that has meaning and value to them, more than just a job; they have high expectations for success; they are used to a world where they have always been connected and can easily learn new skills; they are deeply involved in social networking online; and they expect to have a voice in decision-making processes and work together with others in a cooperative environment (Lancaster & Stillman, 2010). Generation Y also tends to be more peer-oriented than other generations, as well as more connected to peers due to the availability of technologies (Strutton, Taylor, & Thompson, 2011). With these characteristics in mind, the question is, how do university marketers tap into what they know about Millennials in order to present their information in a way that fits into Generation Y lifestyles and expectations?

MESSAGE CONTROL VS. CREDIBILITY

More than any generation before them, Generation Y consumers have a wide variety of communication channels available to seek information. Not only do marketers need to pay attention to television, newspapers, and magazines, but they now must also remember that young consumers are accessing information online and through mobile devices (McCrea, 2011). Generation Y consumers are consuming content on multiple screens throughout the day, and they

are seeking out information that *matters* to them, using their friends and social networks as sources of confirmation (McCrea, 2011).

According to Rogers (2003), the innovation-decision process is made up of five main steps: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation. It is

“the process through which an individual (or other decision-making unit) passes from first knowledge of an innovation, to the formation of an attitude toward the innovation, to a decision to adopt or reject, to implementation and use of the new idea, and to confirmation of this decision” (Rogers, 2003, p. 20).

Purchasing relies on this process as consumers must first learn about products and then make the decision to adopt and implement them into their routines. They use information-seeking activities as well as information-processing to decrease their uncertainty about a decision (Rogers, 2003). As discussed by Rogers (2003), the confirmation stage is a key step of the innovation-decision process, and young people are looking to their peers to help them reinforce important decisions. University housing choices are an important purchasing decision for young adults.

Message Control

An important component of students' confirmation process is related to their use of social networks and how they communicate with their peers and other online users. Social networks are becoming a key place for consumers to find information and for marketers to engage with consumers because of their role in how the generation makes choices, as referenced previously (McCrea, 2011). Social networks are one form of UGC that allow consumers to share information about decisions and choices with one another.

Some organizations remain hesitant to embrace UGC because of its nature as an outlet for user criticism. Users can create and distribute virtually anything on the Internet, causing

marketers to have a lack of control of content that exists about their brand. Through the rise of UGC, everyday people are allowed to bypass traditional media gatekeepers such as radio, television, and print to have their voices heard by the masses (McConnell & Huba, 2007a, b). One person can have a great influence on an organization's brand, and that influence can be good or bad.

Although many universities feel the need to take precautions with sharing UGC about their brand, the content exists, and a student audience is a perfect example of an audience that is adept at using technologies that allow the content to spread rapidly. By gaining an understanding of how students are using social media tools and what types of content they look for through UGC, university housing departments can more effectively communicate their services to their students and provide platforms that enable conversations between the housing staff and the student customers.

Search

In order to understand students' content use, marketers must first consider how users are specifically seeking out information. Wading through sources of information is an everyday process that young consumers must engage in to make their decisions. Public media including newspapers, magazines, radio, and television, have not gone away, although studies have shown the decline of newspaper readership among young consumers (Berman & Kesterson-Townes, 2012; Jordaan, Ehlers, & Grové, 2011). Marketers now have the added ability to connect with consumers on a more engaging level through the use of interactive media including websites, search engines, social networks, blogs, community news sites, email, text messaging, podcasts, and other media (Hallahan, 2010).

However, users are not passive observers of information that they receive from marketers. Rather than waiting for messages to reach them, they seek out information and search on their own using a variety of tools and interactive media available. The Internet allows users to find information in a manner similar to how consumers would find information offline.

According to Peterson and Merino (2003),

“Because the on-line, virtual environment of the Internet is in certain ways analogous to the offline, physical environment of the real world, in many regards the Internet makes available information that parallels, or is analogous to, information traditionally acquired from real world physical sources. Consumers can acquire information from Web sites that is similar to information available from traditional mass-media advertising. They can acquire (marketer-controlled) information directly from retailers or manufacturers—information that mimics the information they could acquire from a salesperson or customer service representative. Moreover, they can acquire information similar to that which could be obtained from face-to-face word-of-mouth communications, whether from friends, family members, customers, or experts. Further, consumers can obtain information from disinterested, independent third-party providers, such as news media, university institutions, nonprofit organizations, and the like” (p. 105).

Consumers are actively gathering information online from a variety of sources. Peterson and Merino (2003) posit that the Internet enables consumers to spend less time on pre-purchase decisions than other modes of search and that consumers consciously “try to reduce the mental and physical effort required to accomplish specific goal-driven tasks” (p. 110). Flavián, Gurrea, and Orús (2012) refer to this behavior of information seeking as “online foraging” in which users forage the Web to “maximize the information value, while minimizing the amount of resources (e.g. energy, time) exerted to obtain it” (p. 836). Users search to satisfy an information need, and rely on search engines to retrieve information (Flavián et al. 2012). Flavián et al. (2012) also note that users often find themselves under time pressure, which could accelerate their search behaviors, lead to less time scrutinizing findings, and result in under-informed decision-making behaviors.

Credibility

An additional component to consider related to consumers' media use is credibility. Credibility is related to a message's meaning and how its recipient perceives that meaning's value. Credibility of the message as well as the source can be evaluated. As stated by Rouner (2008):

“credibility of messages...is generally defined as a collection of attributes of messages that make the message content or their senders valued relative to the information imparted. The attributes generally refer to either the sources of the messages' content or the authenticity of their meaning. Perceived source or message credibility, then, is generally defined as a message recipient's recognition and holding of evaluative information about these messages and their sources” (pp. 1039-1040).

Viewers create perceptions of messages based on a number of factors. Credibility relates to the evaluation the viewer makes when seeing the content of a message and where it came from. As stated previously, message credibility is highly related to its source and online communication channels are making it easier than ever for consumers to form opinions of message content based on information they receive from one another.

As stated by Christodoulides (2009) consumers “develop their own perspective on companies and brands, a view that is often in conflict with the image a brand wishes to convey” (p. 142). As found in multiple studies, such as a 2006 study conducted by Forrester, North American consumers are more likely to trust the opinion of a friend or acquaintance who has used a product or service than the information directly on the manufacturer's website (Li & Bernoff, 2011). In this sense, consumers may be using outside sources to form perceptions of a brand that are contrary to the brand's desired image.

Along these lines, one aspect of source credibility is expertise. According to Perloff (2014), expertise is the “knowledge or ability ascribed to the communicator” (p. 242). Expertise also relates to the communicators' ability to relate to the audience. As Perloff (2014) describes, it

may not always be in the best interest of the communicator to use an authority figure or “ruling elite” as an expert when someone who is on the same level as the audience may be more effective at relating to personal experiences or situations (p. 242). This could explain why online consumers often trust other online peers over authoritative figures. In this regard, expertise may be valued as more trustworthy when coming from someone who is similar or more like the user.

When online consumers were surveyed in 2010, more than half indicated they trust strangers’ reviews on a retailer’s site (Li & Bernoff, 2011). These studies indicate that consumers value what other users have to say about a product or service, often more than they value the information from the source. A 2012 study by Christodoulides, Jevons, and Bonhomme revealed that UGC has an effect on consumer-based brand equity, and that social media sites contribute to brand equity when used in a participatory manner rather than a top-down marketing approach. This study also found that brands that encourage UGC could create opportunities for relationship building with consumers, in that consumers who have an affinity to a brand may be more likely to create content on behalf of the brand (Christodoulides et al., 2012). In the same study, Christodoulides et al. (2012) found that consumers of UGC often consider content created by other users as more credible than content coming from an institutional source. In this context, it is important for brands to create loyalty with their consumers in order to build relationships that can lead to positive perceptions of the brand, and possibly the creation of positive content by brand ambassadors who could be viewed as experts in relation to a brand.

Other factors that could affect an audience member’s perception of credibility are bias, attractiveness, prior knowledge of a source, or presentation of the message (Slater & Rouner, 1996). All of these variables can have an impact on audience beliefs; online information sharing has the potential to greatly skew or enhance a brand or service’s message.

Social media is about conversation. Web 2.0 is about two-way communication (Seel, 2012). Marketers who want to stay in the game with the newest generation of Gen Y consumers must learn to engage their consumers in a conversation. The Web is the ideal place for connecting with this generation of consumers – it is available 24/7, they can make purchases directly online, and they are free to seek out information for themselves rather than through traditional forms of advertising. It is ideal, and yet, there are still marketers who are not embracing the trend. Marketers are afraid of what consumers will say to each other and how they will share information. They are afraid to give up control, yet research is emerging that positive information is three times more likely to be shared between online consumers than negative information (Smith, 2012). Marketers need to take the leap and allow their users to have a voice.

BEHAVIORAL EFFECTS: ATTITUDE AND INTEREST

This study examines the impact of marketing messages on two important intermediate measures used in marketing – attitudes and interest. Many marketing and public information programs strive to create awareness, positive attitudes, interest, behavioral intent, and ultimately action (typically some kind of buying behavior). However, in the case of this study, students were already aware of Colorado State University and Housing & Dining Services because they had already committed to living in university housing for their first year. Because all first-year students are required to live on campus, and because the focus was not on which housing option the students selected, the researcher did not evaluate behavioral intent in this study. Very few first-year students live off campus (with the approval of an exemption), but the researcher was looking to find information related to the majority of first-year students and their decisions in their housing process.

Attitude

As defined by Eagly and Chaiken (1993), attitude is “a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor” (p. 1). When stimuli are introduced, they engage mental states or dispositions that elicit responses; attitude is one of these states or dispositions (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). This study will address attitude as an evaluative tendency. In this sense, evaluative responses are responses of “approval or disapproval, favor or disfavor, liking or disliking, approach or avoidance, attraction or aversion, or similar reactions” (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p. 3). These contrasting statements will represent attitude as a positive or negative variable.

Attitudes differ from characteristics or personality traits in that attitudes are evaluative and involve a specific object or topic, while personality traits are inherent tendencies related to the individual (Ajzen, 1988; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Unlike personality traits, attitudes are more malleable and evaluations often change when new information is discovered (Ajzen, 1988).

In this study, the stimuli (types of marketing content) will serve as attitude objects. According to Eagly and Chaiken (1993), anything that is discriminable can be evaluated and can function as an attitude object. Attitude is defined in a narrow sense in that only the observed stimuli elicited evaluative responses. After viewing the stimuli, the individuals possessed an attitude, “an internal state that endures for at least a short period of time and presumably energizes and directs behavior” (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p. 7). Attitude was evaluated as a variable that could potentially affect how students make decisions.

Interest

As described by Swedberg (2005), many different ideas make up the concept of interest, which often must be reinvented when used in sociological terms. He describes interest in a Middle Ages sense in which early thinkers thought of it as “(1) a force that helped to account for the actor’s behaviour; (2) a force that came from inside the actor; and (3) a force in which important significance was attached to the difference between the existence of the force and the actor becoming aware of its existence” (Swedberg, 2005, p. 26). From this, one can derive that interest involves an emotional prompt or a feeling that when experienced can lead to a change in behavior. Swedberg (2005) goes on to address interest as a force that expresses something the actor really wants. Because of this, interest becomes a driving force of social behavior (Swedberg, 2005). However, Swedberg (2005) argues that interest should not be defined so narrowly as to only describe a behavior; he makes the analogy that interest involves activity, and in a sense, is like following a sign-post – that it describes something people do with their minds and whole being.

In education research, Weber (2003) looks at interest as a three-dimensional construct consisting of meaningfulness, impact, and competence, where meaningfulness relates to perceived value, impact refers to the fact that the given task makes a difference, and competence refers to one’s feelings about their abilities and knowledge. When these three dimensions are met, and one feels they have the ability and knowledge to complete a task that makes a difference, they will feel more interested (Weber, 2003).

AIDA stands for awareness, interest, desire, and action (Barry, 1987). In advertising research, the AIDA model is a prevalent component of measuring interest. The first stage of this model involves attracting a customer’s attention to a product or message (Gharibi, Seyed

Danesh, & Shahrodi, 2012). Second, interest should be generated through demonstrating features and benefits. Third, enthusiasm should be generated for making the customer want the product, and finally, the decision to buy or purchase completes the model (Gharibi, et al., 2012). Saad (2009) describes the interest and desire phases as indicating the degree of engagement. Various additions to the AIDA model have included elements such as conviction, confidence, satisfaction, and judgment, but interest remains an integral component of sales and advertising strategies (Barry, 1987).

Utilizing a combination of the previous descriptions, interest was identified in this study as a measure of involvement and excitement about the activities described in the marketing and user-generated materials. Interest involves a heightened state of cognitive and affective processing where audiences focus and mentally elaborate on messages, also known as message processing involvement (Hallahan, 2005). Interest is viewed as an emotional prompt that increases the perceived relevance of the message and allows the interviewees to envision themselves as college students – a prompt that allows them to project themselves into the student experience. Interest will be related to the classic AIDA model in that during the housing decision-making process, students must first become aware of their choices, a facilitation of interest must be generated before they can choose a preference, and then an action must be made in order to complete the application process.

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on conceptualization, this qualitative study aims to investigate the roles and comparative effectiveness of marketer-generated and user-generated messages on the attitudes and interest levels of prospective first-year students (“customers”) expected to live in university housing at Colorado State University. This study is grounded in the idea that students are dependent on official materials produced by the University for factual and motivational information, but also can rely on a wide range of sources, including UGC produced by current and past residents. It also recognizes that students are not solely involved in making housing choices. Indeed, they often must collaborate with parents or family members, who play a role as advisors, approvers of the choices, and the ultimate buyer. As discussed in the literature review, Generation Y consumers are gleaning information from one another more often, whether that information is positive or negative. Social media is used widely within the student demographic and young consumers may find information from one another to be more credible than information from an institutional source. The research questions used in this study address these topics.

The five research questions that provided the basis for this study are:

RQ1: Do students look to the housing department’s website and printed publications as their primary sources of information?

RQ2: Assuming that marketer-generated materials are their primary sources of information, to what extent do they rely on content created by peers or friends with previous experience as secondary sources to give them the information they need to make or confirm decisions?

RQ3: Do students perceive user-generated information found on social networking sites as credible? Is it more or less credible than information coming from the institution?

RQ4: Do students think traditional forms of marketing content are more or less effective in soliciting interest or positive attitude than non-traditional/UGC?

RQ5: What role does traditional marketing content versus non-traditional content play in the decision-making processes involving both the student and their parent(s) or family members?

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

In order to discover how college students gather and evaluate information received from housing marketing materials and from their peers, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with admitted first-year students who had submitted their housing application to Colorado State University or had recently moved on campus. Although a quantitative methodology, such as a survey, might have been conducted to investigate these questions, the researcher opted for qualitative in-depth interviews in order to gather rich, descriptive examples of how college students seek out information. It was thought that in-depth interviews would also provide valuable insights that could be used by the researcher's employer, Colorado State University Housing & Dining Services, in considering the best mix of media messages to foster positive attitudes and interest among incoming students.

SAMPLING

Participants were recruited in multiple ways. First, purposive sampling of admitted first-year students who completed their housing application between November 15, 2012 and January 1, 2013 for entrance into Colorado State University in the fall 2013 semester was conducted to

solicit an initial response from student participants. The researcher emailed approximately 200 students and sent approximately 255 letters by mail. (For an example of the invitation, see Appendix A.) After this recruitment tactic yielded no results, the researcher used a purposive word-of-mouth sampling method to recruit students who were acquaintances of colleagues and others in the researcher's network. This sampling method yielded four student interviews. The researcher also distributed flyers to students during the summer Preview Orientation, yielding one interview. Once the semester began, the researcher was able to secure an additional five interviews with students who expressed interest through snowball sampling from previous participants as well as word-of-mouth sampling and solicitation from flyers in the dining centers. The interviews took place between April and September 2013. All participants met with the researcher for an in-person interview at the Palmer Center at Colorado State University. Ten students were recruited with the intent of reaching saturation in the themes developed from the interviews. Six of the students were female, and four of the students were male. By interviewing a diverse sample of students, including male, female, in-state, and out-of-state students, including one international student, the researcher had a wide range of viewpoints to study.

DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH ARTIFACTS

During the interviews, students were asked their opinions about four stimuli (a marketer-generated Housing Guide publication, marketer-generated video, user-generated YouTube video, and user-generated Facebook group) utilized to initiate discussion and to serve as administrative research for the department of Housing & Dining Services. The four stimuli aided the researcher in guiding the conversations during the interviews and served as reference points for determining how the students perceived messages coming from the institution versus user-generated

messages coming from other students. Two of the stimuli were created by the department of Housing & Dining Services, and two of the stimuli were user-generated. (See Appendices B-E.) The researcher used these artifacts to gain a sense of how the students perceived the messaging. The two categories of stimuli contributed to the comparison of the effectiveness of UGC and controlled media in gaining students' interest.

Marketer-generated materials

The Housing Guide publication (Appendix B) follows the Colorado State University branding standards, utilizing a look and feel consistent with many of the university's marketing materials. The publication and video (Appendix C) each feature the positive aspects of living on campus, and show photos and footage of the campus experience. As described by Hallahan (2010), these stimuli fall into the category of controlled media. They are detailed and informative, and facilitate the action of choosing where to live on campus. The Housing Guide utilizes a 32-page format, detailing information regarding residence hall choices, room and board rates, dining features, student profiles, and application information, among other features. The Housing Guide is distributed by mail to all admitted students when they receive their letter of acceptance to the university; therefore, all of the students should have received a copy of the publication in advance of the interview. A question of interest was if the students paid attention to the publication or noticed its arrival at their homes.

The housing video is available on Housing & Dining Services' website, located at <http://www.housing.colostate.edu>. Since the study took place, the website has been redesigned; however, all of the interviews were conducted before the redesign of the site. During the study, each of the thirteen residence halls on the Colorado State University campus had a page on the

website that included a video featuring a student giving a tour of the residence hall. For the purpose of this study, the researcher utilized the Corbett Hall video that was formerly located at <http://www.housing.colostate.edu/halls/corbett.htm> (and is now located at <http://housingmap.colostate.edu/> by clicking on the icon on the Corbett Hall location). The video was displayed prominently at the top of the Corbett Hall page, which listed detailed information on the amenities and features of the building. The video featured a student tour guide who gives a walk through of a residence hall room, study lounge, front desk area, game lounge, and dining center. The video featured a conversational tone and was not scripted. The video is representative of the thirteen similar videos found on the Housing & Dining Services website.

User-generated materials

The user-generated video (Appendix D) was a student-created project that also features Corbett Hall. It is located on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N95tPX3x99Y&feature=related>. The video is composed of interviews with Corbett residents who share their experiences living at Corbett, often after moving from another hall. This video was created without the involvement of Housing & Dining Services. Negative perceptions of other residence halls on campus are shared, as the student creator tries to convey why Corbett is the best place to live on campus.

The Facebook page (Appendix E) is the CSU Rams Class of 2017 group created in fall 2012 for Colorado State University incoming students. This page was created by the Office of Admissions as a place for new students to get to know one another, although the office does not make postings and it is used as a peer-to-peer communication channel, rather than an institution-influenced channel. Over 3,000 student members regularly participate in discussions and make

postings on the page. Many questions related to housing were posed and shared during the time before the beginning of the fall semester. The researcher showed sections of the conversations related to housing choices during the interviews.

The user-generated video and the Facebook group are classified as non-sponsored interactive media. These channels fall into the category of social media as described in Chapter 2. While these channels are not influenced by marketing staff at Colorado State University, there are situations in which they could serve as positive marketing tools when they help students find answers about living on campus. Online channels also allow the opportunity for people in separate physical locations to come together (Hallahan, 2010).

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROCEDURE

As Lindlof and Taylor (2011) describe, developing rapport is the first objective of in-depth interviews. Because the students interviewed had not met the researcher before the time of their interviews, the researcher strived to put the participants at ease by displaying a friendly, respectful, and professional demeanor. During the interviews, the participants were briefed about the study and why they had been recruited and the researcher strived to develop a comfortable situation in which the participants felt respected and could express themselves without fear of being viewed negatively (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). See Appendix F for an outline of the opening script that was used as a reference to begin the conversation during each interview.

All interviews were conducted under the guidelines and approval of Colorado State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). One-on-one interviews were conducted on the Colorado State University campus with the students and were recorded using a digital audio recording app. Consistent with qualitative methods, reflexivity was an important facet of the

analysis (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011); therefore, individual differences of the participants were noted in regard to how they affected the role of the researcher in the interpretation.

All participants were briefed at the beginning of the interview and were asked to review and sign an informed consent form (see Appendix G). A copy of the consent form was given to each participant.

Each interview began with a short oral assessment consisting of close-ended questions regarding the student's media usage in order to gain a sense of the tech savviness of the students and the range of technical abilities in the sample. The assessment followed a similar structure to O'Reilly and Marx's (2011) technical survey. Questions included several yes/no statements adapted from O'Reilly and Marx (2011) and additional statements that were added to the assessment by the researcher. A short Likert-type scale to measure prior attitudes toward various media tools was also included. (For an example of the opening questions, see Appendix H.) The researcher recorded responses on a summary sheet for each participant, which was used for reference during the more in-depth questions that followed. This helped determine if technical skills played a significant role in how likely the students were to utilize online information over traditional sources, such as the university's printed publications. It also gave the researcher a point of reference if students had prior attitudes about specific types of media, such as Facebook and online videos. Including this additional method in the study allowed for a wider perspective of where the students were coming from and their backgrounds in regard to media use.

Semi-structured interviews were chosen in order to gain an understanding of the college students' perceptions of housing information. As Hermanowicz (2002) states, the semi-structured interview "is among the most basic and fundamental of methods, and one which, if executed well, brings us arguably closer than many other methods to an intimate understanding of people

and their social worlds” (p. 480). As part of the interview the four stimuli were included in the following order: housing publication, housing video, user-generated video, and a student-focused Facebook page. Questions were asked after each stimulus was shown related to the stimulus and its effectiveness in soliciting interest, a positive attitude, and a sense of credibility. Additional follow-up questions were asked after each of the stimuli were shown and discussed. The interviews were guided by a flexible interview guide/protocol (Appendix I), consisting of questions aimed at gathering the students’ perspectives regarding the traditional content and UGC created by peers, as well as their information gathering behaviors. The guide served as a starting point and list of topics to consider (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011).

The researcher used a list of questions for reference and tailored the interview questions according to the responses given by each participant during the context of the interview. Each interview evolved as the researcher used the constant comparison approach of interpreting themes throughout the interview process (O’Reilly & Marx, 2011). Interviews were structured to be 60 to 90 minutes, based on Hermanowicz’s (2002) guidelines for an interview guide consisting of 20 to 30 questions. This timeframe was used as a general guide, however, and was not a strict limit or time requirement. The interview times varied based on the responses given and the conversational nature of the interview process. The majority of the interviews were approximately 60 minutes.

Throughout the interview process, the researcher kept in mind Hermanowicz’s (2002) 25 strategies for great interviews. These include such tips as keeping a conversation going, listening, exploring meaning – asking why?, probing for more detail, wording questions clearly, strategically planning the sequence/topics, being candid, but respectful, showing care while

remaining detached, rehearsing to make sure the questions make sense, ending on a positive note, and continuously practicing the art of interviewing. As he points out:

...great interviews are richly detailed. Even though in a great interview one may also conclude by sensing there is more to know about the respondent—since something about someone always runs a good chance of being unshared—the interviewer nevertheless walks away with the realization that someone’s essence or inner core—the stuff that makes them tick—has been tapped and bled to show several of the constitutional elements of the respondent and his or her social world. (Hermanowicz, 2002, pp. 481)

With careful execution throughout the interview process, the researcher was able to tap into what made some of the students tick, and gained a sense of how they make meaning within the contexts of their decisions. As Hermanowicz (2002) states, there was often a sense that there could be more to know about the students, but the researcher felt that each of the interviews were successful in developing a rapport with the students that allowed them to share their insights and perspectives. The interviews often led to laughter and conversation throughout the process, allowing the students to relax and share their personalities and interests with the researcher.

By utilizing the qualitative interview method to grasp candid and honest impressions of the content that students are using to form their decisions, the researcher feels this study helped lead to a better understanding of what students need from marketing professionals. Additional details on the findings from the interviews are included in Chapter 4.

DATA ORGANIZATION

The researcher chose not to take extensive notes during the interviews in order to aid in the production of successful conversations with the students. Once the interviews were recorded, the researcher saved two copies of the audio files on password-protected computers in two separate physical locations in order to maintain the integrity and confidentiality of the files. All audio files were immediately deleted from the recording device once they had been saved. The

researcher then transcribed each of the audio recordings and saved transcripts in the two secure locations. At the conclusion of the study, these will be turned over for safekeeping to the Department of Journalism and Technical Communication in keeping with IRB and federal requirements.

ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

The approach to interpretation began using the hermeneutic circle method as outlined by Patterson and Williams (2002). This style of interpretation allows the researcher to use an emergent selection of methods for interpretation, while aiming for a holistic view of the data (Patterson & Williams, 2002). As eloquently described by Ruth Wodak (2011):

Hermeneutics can be viewed as the *art* of explaining cultural manifestations, particularly texts (in a wide sense...), which should ensure the validity and adequacy of their interpretation and related processes of comprehension. This art – in its original sense – does not require, or rely on, any *systematic description, categorization* and/or *analysis of form and content*, of text and context, or of language in use. In contrast to any linguistic analysis of form and content (and, of course, to any natural sciences' causal explanation), hermeneutics attempts to *grasp* and *produce* meaning relations as human behaviour, and interaction is considered to be meaningful and to make sense. Moreover, the concept of the *hermeneutic circle* is relevant for the interpretation of textual meanings: the meaning of a part can only be understood in the context of the whole; however, the meaning of the whole is only accessible via its parts. (Wodak, 2011, pp. 624)

As described, the hermeneutic method attempts to find meaning within the text: in this case, the interviews, and to understand that meaning within the context of the whole. The researcher aimed to develop idiographic interpretations of the individual interviews during the analysis process, as well as a nomothetic interpretation across the interviews (Patterson & Williams, 2002).

The responses to the closed-ended questions were summarized from the answer sheets completed by the researcher in the interviews. Responses to the remaining in-depth questions,

which are the main focus of the study, were transcribed verbatim in order to capture the nuances of each respondent's answers. The researcher made notes of interpretation in the margins of the interview transcripts throughout the process in order to continuously develop themes to organize the data. Following the steps of the organizing system outlined by Patterson and Williams (2002), an indexing system was developed in order to create a reference guide for certain parts of the text. The indexing system involved numbering the sections of the interviews in order to serve as reference points as the researcher analyzed the data. Once the initial interviews were completed, the researcher continued to read through the interview transcripts and identify the meaning units found within the text. As described by Patterson and Williams (2002), the meaning units represent the "hard data' or evidence that the researcher will use to persuade the reader that the analysis and interpretations are warranted" (p. 47). This data serves as solid examples that are used within the text of the interpretation. The researcher then developed thematic labels as the texts were interpreted. The researcher read and reread the interviews multiple times, coding for themes that emerged as they were read. A color-coded visual representation was also used to organize the themes and interrelationships among the data. "Seeing, understanding, and explaining the interrelationships among themes is one of the key features of hermeneutic analysis that offers the possibility of holistic and insightful interpretation" (Patterson & Williams, 2002, p. 48).

One of the unique steps in this hermeneutic process of interpretation is the process of first looking at the individual interviews to begin the idiographic analysis (Patterson & Williams, 2002). The goal was to try to interpret the individual interviews as quickly as possible after they each took place, in order to identify themes that could surface within the other interviews. In this process of constantly interpreting and reinterpreting the data, the researcher hoped to find a rich

narrative that would not only describe the identities of the individuals, but would bring to the surface themes that emerge across the students' interviews. The data from this constant interpretation was used in subsequent interviews and allowed the researcher to add questions and probe for greater detail based on themes that had emerged in previous interviews. After all of the interviews were conducted, the researcher used the identified themes to explain the greater meanings that emerged across the sample, as noted later in Chapter 4.

After the themes were developed and the researcher began to grasp the interrelationships among the data, the nomothetic interpretation began. Using verbatim comments from the interviews, as well as the interpretations, the researcher came up with a justificatory analysis of the data; that is, an argument for how the specific excerpts were selected and why certain excerpts may have been left out (Patterson & Williams, 2002). This writing up of the interpretation was an important part of the process. The interpretation is not merely a summary of what was said in the interviews, but is intended to make meaning out of what the students included in their representations of their behaviors. The researcher has made an effort to tell readers as much as possible in the written interpretation that follows. Although charts or graphs could have been used to categorize the students' responses, the researcher has chosen not to reduce the texts in this way, in keeping with the hermeneutic process.

The final result is an interpretive text that has not only uncovered meaning within the individual students' perspectives, but that has also developed a holistic sense of what the students described in their patterns and methods of gathering information. The final piece explains why students make the decisions they do in regard to housing selection, and why they view institutional information as more credible than user-generated information. The

interpretation addresses the content that students have viewed and whether or not the specific types of content led to positive attitude, interest, and perceptions of credibility.

The researcher took steps to assure quality throughout the data collection process in order to maintain credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order to address credibility, to make sure the data holds true and is representative of the participants, the researcher used verbatim transcription, as described previously, to analyze the meanings of the participants' responses. The researcher followed the protocol outlined within the proposal in order to address dependability and confirmability of the study. All processes were well documented and the researcher took into account reflexivity in order to ensure that the interpretation produced from the study is grounded in the findings and data presented. Confirmability and neutrality can be examined through the audit trail, consisting of the raw data from the interviews and the researcher's notes. The research study has been documented in an effort to allow for transferability for future studies of incoming college students. An effort has been made to produce valuable information related to Generation Y incoming college students and their decision-making behaviors.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

STUDENT PERSONALITIES

Students come to college with a wide range of expectations and needs. As part of the hermeneutic analysis, the researcher felt it was important to look at each individual student's personality and motivations to better understand the interviews within the context of the whole. Understanding what drives these students adds an additional facet to understanding why they make certain decisions. These summaries of the students' personalities are not meant to reduce the students' representations of themselves into neat, orderly packages, but rather, are meant to provide a starting point and context for understanding the additional findings. The personalities conveyed are those that were presented to the researcher during the interviews, and are the researcher's interpretation of the students' worldviews. Pseudonyms have been used in place of the students' actual names.

Alex

Alex is an in-state student who is familiar with the Northern Colorado area and started working at one of the dining centers on campus before coming to college. She indicated in the media assessment that Facebook and online videos each rank highly in her media preferences. Alex became a member of the Class of 2017 Facebook group before coming to campus in order to make new connections. She feels comfortable communicating with her peers in this way, because she feels she can gain valuable information about the college experience without having to go to the source for answers to questions. Alex noted that she was not able to watch all of the videos on the Housing & Dining Services website because of the old technology she has available. She also noted that her parents are not computer savvy, so she made a lot of the

decisions related to housing on her own. They were comfortable letting her make her decision as long as she didn't choose something too expensive. CSU was Alex's college choice early on, so when it took a while for her to receive her acceptance letter, she was apprehensive. Alex looked to her peers and coworkers for advice, and indicated several times throughout the interview that their influence was important and helpful to her. She also trusts UGC as a credible source of information.

Andrew

Andrew is an in-state student from a small town in Colorado. He was a very soft-spoken and friendly student who placed a lot of emphasis on fitting in at college and being able to form a community with other students, which is one of the reasons he purposefully chose to live in a community-style building. He liked sharing the community bathroom as a way to get to know everyone on his floor. Andrew is very focused on academics and finding others who he can build connections with within his program and areas of interest. He indicated the lowest media use of all of the students interviewed. Andrew has never had a Facebook account, in part because he doesn't want to be affiliated with some of the postings that people put on Facebook, but also because he feels other forms of communication are superior to social media. He would rather text his friends than take the time to communicate through a channel such as Facebook. Andrew's mother attended CSU, and he based some of his hall decisions off of her prior experience rather than taking time to watch the videos online. Andrew was the only student who indicated he did not watch any of the videos on the Housing & Dining Services website because he already felt comfortable with his hall choice and had a pretty set mind as to what location he wanted to live in and what type of hall he wanted to choose.

Garrett

Garrett is an in-state student who comes to CSU from the Denver area. He is highly influenced by family traditions and his family members who have attended CSU before him. Most recently, Garrett's brother and cousin came to CSU, and each of them lived in Corbett Hall. Garrett also chose to live in Corbett Hall because he remembered spending weekend visits with his brother and enjoying the experience, and he knows that his brother and cousin made strong connections and relationships while living in Corbett. Garrett only spent time watching the Corbett video on the Housing & Dining Services website and didn't take the other halls into consideration. For him, coming to college was a straightforward process and he felt like he was able to find most of the information he needed with ease. Garrett ranked Facebook over online videos in the technical assessment, and indicated during the interview that he was a member of the Class of 2017 Facebook group and used it several times throughout the summer to find answers to his questions or answer questions for other students. Garrett had a smooth transition into the college experience, as another student from his high school was also placed on the same floor at Corbett, so they were able to participate in the opening orientation activities together, which was comforting. Garrett is a friendly student, who gave to-the-point answers, and conveyed a sense of confidence in his choices surrounding housing and CSU.

Geri

Geri is an in-state student who is from the Loveland area, and has a familiarity with CSU and Northern Colorado. Geri comes across as a very studious, serious student. She talked about her excitement to be a part of the Engineering program and to get to experience college with

other students who will be serious about their academics as well. Geri was homeschooled before coming to college, so knowing that a few other students she knows from work and high school activities will also be coming to CSU is comforting to her. Geri rated online videos higher than Facebook in the technical assessment, and mentioned several times throughout the interview that she is on Facebook but doesn't post very often and prefers to see what others are doing rather than being really vocal on the medium herself. She did not join the Class of 2017 Facebook group after hearing about it because of her low social media usage. Geri met her roommate at the restaurant where they both work and was excited to get to live with someone that she was comfortable with and respects. She values information from her peers and is more likely to trust information from people she already knows than information she finds online from peers she doesn't know. Geri was a friendly student and her excitement about coming to college was contagious.

Karen

Karen is an in-state student from the Northern Colorado area and exuded a sense of confidence the moment she walked into the interview. Based on her responses, it was apparent that Karen is a high-achieving, independent student who has high expectations of college and the on-campus experience. She has chosen to live in Braiden Hall and be part of the Key Health Professions Community, an academic-focused community for students who intend to have careers in health professions in the future. She indicated that online videos ranked higher for her than Facebook, and she had spent time watching all of the videos on the Housing & Dining website before she made her choice to live in Braiden Hall. Karen had done her research about CSU and also intended to join the President's Leadership Program. Karen has a personal

connection with an administrator on campus, so having that resource was valuable to her as she made her decisions and choices. Karen mentioned that she liked personalized information, and felt that receiving the Housing Guide publication in the mail was more personal than finding information such as the videos online. She definitely indicated that she trusts institutional information over UGC, and had a sense of skepticism about student-created materials and responses, although she did feel they were authentic.

Leo

Leo is an in-state student whose family just moved to Colorado from the Southeastern U.S. one year ago. Leo had a bubbly, outgoing personality and was eager to share his experiences and opinions. Of all of the students interviewed, Leo indicated the most technology use on the technical assessment. He indicated that he likes online videos more than Facebook, and technology was a recurring theme throughout his interview. Leo was slightly nervous about the thought of coming to college and having a roommate, but over the summer, a friend of his stayed with his family so he felt that helped him get used to the idea. However, Leo was fortunate to be placed in a single room, which he was very excited about, so he didn't end up with a roommate anyway. He mentioned that he has become friends with everyone on his floor, and constantly has multiple people in his room playing video games. Leo also indicated being influenced by his peers and friends who had experienced living on campus before him. He made his hall choices solely based on information he had received from friends. Leo had a very nonchalant attitude when explaining his thought process about coming to college – he did not worry about it, because he knew he would make friends, so for him, the transition was easy. The part of the process that did worry Leo was getting accepted into CSU because of his poor grades

in high school. When he finally received his acceptance letter, he mentions thinking it was a joke, but was ecstatic to find out that it was true. Leo obviously enjoys peer interaction and was a big fan of the Class of 2017 Facebook group, which he has used in the past in order to find information.

Lisa

Lisa is an out-of-state student from the West Coast who is very mature and independent. She is academic-minded, and chose CSU because of the availability of her specialized major. Lisa did her research before choosing housing and thoroughly checked all of her resources. She indicated liking Facebook more than online videos in the assessment, but watched all of the online videos on the Housing & Dining Services website before making her choices. Lisa is not greatly influenced by her peers, and part of that is because she did not know anyone coming to CSU before moving in. Lisa knew about the Class of 2017 Facebook group but had decided not to join the group because she felt it was often immature and she did not want to be associated with the postings that other students made on the page. For Lisa, finding a hall with a sense of community and involvement was important. Lisa mentioned multiple times that she also has some dietary limitations, so dining choices were an important consideration for her and she wanted to find a hall that would have the option of an available kitchen as well. Lisa indicated that her parents let her make her decisions on her own, but they were very supportive and helpful when she had questions. She had a lot of excitement about CSU and about starting her college experience that would likely lead to grad school in the future.

Sara

Sara is an in-state student who started college at the age of 17. She had a realistic outlook on college and making choices, however, there was a lot of apprehension for her at the thought of coming to college earlier than most other students. The themes of fitting in and finding approval for her choices were apparent throughout the interview. Sara was definitely influenced by her peers, and valued their input. She started a job on campus that allowed her to make connections with older students who were able to give her advice and opinions about housing choices. Of all of the students interviewed, Sara had the strongest opinion about social media and Facebook in particular. For Sara, Facebook was a medium that allowed someone to have a second identity, which she didn't appreciate, and she felt many students spent time hiding behind their social media identities rather than being who they really were. Sara had deleted her Facebook account and gave Facebook one of the lowest ratings of all the students on the technical assessment. Authenticity was important to Sara, so the user-generated video made a big impression on her. She often second guessed her choices throughout the interview and was easily influenced by what she was viewing or reading. Sara had a sense of skepticism that was not evident in the other interviews, although she was definitely excited about the college experience and the thought of making new friends and connections.

Sebastian

Sebastian is an international student from Germany who is studying at CSU for one year. Coming to the U.S. was very exciting for Sebastian, and he did a lot of research on possible locations and universities before making his choice. The academic status of the university was important to him, as well as the resources and community activities that would be available.

Sebastian did not receive any information in the mail, so all of his choices were based off of information he found online or advice he had been given through the international exchange office on campus. Sebastian rated online videos and Facebook as high preferences on the scale, and used both of the mediums as he was making his decision to come to CSU. Sebastian noted how important online videos were in order to get a sense of what the campus would be like and what he could expect. He watched all of the videos on the Housing & Dining Services website as well as numerous videos on the CSU YouTube channel. Despite all of this, he was still shocked by the size of the campus when he arrived and said there was an overall culture shock for the first couple weeks as he learned the routine of life on a college campus in the U.S.

Yvette

Yvette is an out-of-state student athlete who is a member of one of the women's athletic teams on campus. A lot of Yvette's choices were dictated by her involvement on the team, including her residence hall choice. Yvette rated online videos higher than Facebook, and noted that she did watch some of the videos before coming to campus. Yvette interacted with her teammates to ask questions related to the college experience. Because most of her teammates are upperclassmen, Yvette felt the need to go back and check some of the resources for herself in case anything had changed since their first years on campus, but overall, she trusted her peers and valued the input of other students. A theme that came up during the interview with Yvette was that she lacked a sense of involvement or fitting in within her residence hall. Yvette was placed in a room without a roommate and without suitemates, so she did not have instant connections with students other than her teammates. She mentioned multiple times that she was excited to make friends, and upon viewing the Class of 2017 Facebook page, indicated that she

would join it when she got back to her room because she thought it would be a good way to meet more people.

PERCEPTIONS OF STIMULI

The four stimuli were shown during each interview in the order of Housing Guide publication, housing video, user-generated YouTube video, and student-focused Class of 2017 Facebook page, as mentioned in Chapter 3. The researcher showed each material and asked questions about the student's perceptions afterwards. This process was completed for each stimulus during each interview. Students were given time to look through the publication and view the complete videos during the interview. The Facebook page was scrolled through while the questions were being addressed.

Marketer-generated material: Housing Guide publication

The first stimulus introduced to the students was the Housing Guide publication. The majority of students reported a positive attitude when viewing the Housing Guide. Students enjoyed looking at the photos, the bright colors, and the happy people featured in the book. Lisa, who had not visited campus before she received the publication stated,

“Visually it’s appealing, the cover-wise, and it’s informative, knowing that it’s the Housing Guide. And just by looking at it, I was intrigued to look through it, because it looks like a social atmosphere living-wise, but then also the people are active and happy. And my favorite color’s green so that was just another benefit!”

Two of the students did not remember seeing the publication when they first glanced at it, but after looking through and talking about it with the researcher, they remembered it. Sebastian, the international student, did not receive one before coming to campus but felt it would have been beneficial: “...there are a lot of pictures, and that helps a lot... I definitely would have had a

better... a better view of what I can expect of the dorms.” For him, it was hard to get a good grasp on what campus would be like, and he felt the Housing Guide would have helped him understand some of the housing arrangements better than other sources of information he had looked at. One student, Alex, reported that the photos seemed too commercial to her, but the majority of other students liked seeing the happy people in the photos and thought they gave a positive impression of housing at the University. Overall, receiving the Housing Guide was a positive experience for the students.

All of the students reported having an interest and sense of excitement when viewing the Housing Guide. Multiple students mentioned that receiving the publication made coming to college seem real, and that it was exciting to be able to think about how they would decorate or arrange their own rooms when they saw photos of the rooms featured in the book. The book allowed them to project themselves into the college students’ experience. As described by Karen, “[the Housing Guide] made it seem real because this is like the biggest thing – like moving out and going to college.” Karen’s only complaint was that the publication was so big that it was a bit intimidating. Sara also addressed this, but for her, the size of the publication went hand-in-hand with the college experience: “...the transition to freshman year is also overwhelming, so it kind of goes together. It didn’t really confuse me at all, it was just like ‘ok, I’ll get used to it now!’” The features in the book that came up multiple times throughout the interviews as being the most exciting pieces of information were the hall features chart, the 3D floor plans of the residence hall rooms, and the campus map. When asked if the book excited him, Leo responded,

“I believe it did. I mean, especially when I got to this page [shows 3D floor plan page] – I was able to see what my room was gonna look like. And, uh, I got a single, so I was really excited about looking at that.”

For several of the students, the publication was the first introduction to the room layouts and types of rooms available to them, so seeing a visual representation of where they would be living in the future was helpful.

All of the students felt that the Housing Guide was a credible source of information, since it came directly from Housing & Dining Services. Students felt they could believe the content presented to them in the publication and felt it was informative and useful for making their decisions. Several students reported the book giving information they did not find elsewhere, so it was a valuable resource for them as they made choices related to housing. When noticing a student feature in the book that led to additional YouTube content of the student speaking about his experience, Sebastian was impressed:

“...being able to see the video where he speaks himself, that’s helpful, because I worked in a Human Resources department and we faked a lot of statements like this and put a picture, so I don’t trust very many, but if you have a video where he speaks himself, that’s very trust – I mean, that’s true. So that’s a good idea.”

The student features gave Andrew a sense of ease; his high expectations of college made him anxious, but seeing the students who were willing to talk about their experiences helped settle his mind. Yvette felt the students looked like they were having fun, and when asked how the publication made her feel, she responded, “It makes me feel welcome, I guess, ‘cause you guys are showing me so much information... I feel like I’m gonna have a lot of friends here!”

Marketer-generated material: housing video

The second stimulus introduced to the students was the housing video that featured a tour of Corbett Hall. Again, the majority of students reported a positive attitude when viewing the video. The students liked that the video showed a tour on a normal day, where the residents had actually been living in their room and that there were other students living and interacting in the

building during the tour. The majority of students, like Geri, thought the video was helpful in giving a sense of the actual size of the rooms. For her, the video was more helpful than looking at a floor plan:

“Seeing the actual dorm was pretty exciting to me. ‘Cause sometimes people are like, ‘yeah I’m gonna bring this and this and this and this’ and they don’t even know what their room looks like or what space they have, and I think this actually shows you what the dorm really looks like. Like the layouts are nice, like the floor plan things, but this is like a 3D thing that you can look at and I like that.”

Garrett, one of the students who chose to live in Corbett Hall, said this was the only video that he watched because he knew Corbett would be his first choice. He liked seeing the student tour guide and getting a sense of what his room would be like before he moved in. He felt that a couple points about the dining center were missing, but once he came to campus, he was able to navigate his way through the dining center system and he easily figured it out.

Perhaps more than any other stimuli, the video created a sense of interest and excitement for the students. Of the students interviewed, five of them reported watching all 13 residence hall videos on the Housing & Dining Services website, and two students reported watching several of them. As Lisa stated,

“All of the videos made me really excited actually. Just seeing the people – I watched all of them with my mom because she was excited that I had made my decision, and so we sat there for a couple hours one night just watching all the videos and getting very excited about it.”

Karen also expressed her excitement: “I’ve seen all of them like three times! It’s super informative. I like that it showed you the rooms and also like the lounge areas and dining hall, ‘cause that’s important.” Karen also appreciated the friendly atmosphere that was conveyed in the videos. For Leo, who “watched all of the videos repeatedly,” there was a bit of an anxious feeling when he saw the small size of the room and thought about having a roommate, but overall, he felt the videos were good and he liked how they showed typical rooms with all of the

students' belongings moved in. For Sebastian, the videos were very informative to learn what housing in the United States would be like. He watched all of them two or three times to make his decision on which hall to live in, and felt like the videos were helpful in giving a sense of which places on campus he was excited to see. Because he had never visited campus before moving in, he thought additional information on the locations of each residence hall would be a helpful piece to include in the future.

Like the publication, all of the students found the marketer-generated video to be a credible source of information. The students liked that the tour was led by a student, and felt that even though it was created by Housing & Dining Services, the student tour guide was being honest and genuinely liked living in Corbett Hall. Geri felt like the video wasn't too scripted and the student was really giving her own information:

“Like [Housing & Dining Services] did give her, like you know, ‘you need to talk about this and this,’ but at the same time, she like made it her own. It wasn't like she was like monotone or anything about it. It seemed like she was really passionate about it.”

Lisa also felt like the student was honest and not just reading off a script. Leo expressed that he could tell “she probably enjoyed her stay there, or she wouldn't have volunteered to do the video.” Andrew felt that having the student tour guide helped make the video more relatable. It felt like the student was someone who had had the same experience. Garrett liked that the video didn't try to glorify the building. For him, it was credible because the video made Corbett Hall look like it really is. Yvette, who also lives in Corbett, agreed, saying that it was very accurate and gave her a good sense of what Corbett would be like.

User-generated material: YouTube video

The third stimulus introduced to the students was the user-generated YouTube video about Corbett Hall. This video has a very different feel from the Housing & Dining Services video, as it is obvious that it was created without the influence of the University. Most of the students indicated that the video gave them a positive attitude toward Corbett Hall, although several of them recognized that it was biased. As Lisa indicated,

“Firsthand accounts are always helpful for a new person who hasn’t been to a place before. If I had seen that video before making my decision, I probably would have leaned towards choosing Corbett over the other halls that people moved out of.”

Other students felt a similar sentiment. Andrew thought the video was effective, but wouldn’t have swayed his opinion to live in Corbett because he had already made up his mind:

“From a persuasive standpoint, I thought it was effective. I mean, they went to multiple people and got their points on what hall they chose and why they chose it. And they also chose people that moved into Corbett from other halls.”

Of the students interviewed, six felt like seeing the user-generated video before making their choice would have made them lean towards Corbett. As Alex states, “it definitely makes Corbett seem like a really awesome place to live at. But it kind of makes me feel uncomfortable if I live anywhere else.” In a similar regard, some of the students did not like that the video expressed negative opinions toward other halls. Leo felt like the residence hall experience was really about what the students made of it, so the opinions in the video would be different for everyone:

“I think the interviews were, I mean, they’re ok – they’re really, really biased as you can tell. And of course, to each its own. I like, now if you were looking at Corbett and you were interested in that, that would definitely, you know, kind of help you sway, seeing all these people that really enjoy it. However, I didn’t like how they kind of, they talked down on a lot of the other halls, residence halls, because – and the food too, umm, like, they kept saying that some people, or that it’s harder to meet people at Summit, or they go here and they meet better people and have a better experience, but I feel like you can really get that anywhere. It’s just, you know, who your hall is or who you’re associated with. And they kind of made it seem like you cannot get that experience other than Corbett.”

Karen agreed that the community would be different for everyone. For her, living in a community with other students who have similar academic interests was more important than social interests, and she felt the video only expressed the social aspects of Corbett.

Three of the students indicated that seeing the video would have excited them to live in Corbett Hall. Many of the students indicated that they liked seeing the opinions from multiple people, and that firsthand accounts are helpful, but they didn't necessarily feel a sense of excitement from watching it. As Yvette stated, "They're not really showing you, they're just telling you, so I wouldn't have known that actually if it was true or not." Other students agreed that if it had included some of the tour style where the students would have shown the rooms, it would have been more helpful. Garrett says that he definitely would have believed the students, but he didn't feel like the video showed him what Corbett was actually like:

"It probably would have made me think, 'oh, Corbett's better!' than everything else 'cause that's what all these people were saying. But it didn't really give me any information about anything, it just told me how much better it was."

Sara, on the other hand, thought this video was better than the Housing & Dining Services video:

"I think what would have got me was just how many people came together, and they like, I don't know, they all worked together, and then the one on the Housing & Dining, it was just like, here's my roommate. You know. Like here's this big empty room that we use all the time, but no one's here right now...that someone put it up there without even like trying to make money or anything, you know, like they just did it because they love their own Corbett."

A few students indicated that the video was too long, and they liked how the Housing & Dining Services video was shorter and to the point. A few students also commented on the poor quality of the video, which in some ways led to it being more authentic, but was noticeable because of the newer HD style that students are accustomed to now.

When asked about the credibility of the user-generated video, the students had mixed feelings. Six students indicated that they thought the video was credible because the students featured were giving their honest opinions without trying to sell something or receive any benefit from creating the video. Four students thought the video was not credible; two of them indicated that it wasn't credible because it hadn't been approved by the institution, which enabled students to make things up, and two students indicated that it wasn't credible because it was too one-sided and only gave positive opinions of Corbett. Alex, who thought the video was credible, liked the less professional style: "I like the less professional view of it; I think it's very, it seems like the students know what they're talking about more I guess, because it seems more real." Karen, one of the students who felt the video was not credible because it hadn't been approved by the institution, also cited the video as being "more authentic" due to the unprofessional style of the footage and the ability for the students to say what they want to say. For Sara, authenticity was the factor that made the UGC stand out to her. As she stated, "the one on Housing & Dining didn't convince me to live in Corbett." For Geri, the user-generated video was equally as credible as the Housing & Dining video. She felt that if a similar video had been created about Westfall or Aspen, for instance, the same opinions would have been shared. Sebastian felt the same way:

"It changes every year, so, you never know...I would've watched it if I knew there was a video just to have more input but it wouldn't change my mind that Corbett would be better than Durward or anything like that."

Andrew thought the video was "fairly odd" but the variety of student opinions would have made him want to check out Corbett to see for himself why so many students liked it. Several of the students indicated that this type of video could be a helpful resource for students if Housing &

Dining Services created something in a way that was not overly biased but shared multiple opinions about all of the halls.

User-generated material: Class of 2017 Facebook page

The final stimulus introduced to the students was the CSU Rams Class of 2017 Facebook group. All of the students reported that they liked the idea of having a forum where first-year students could share information and interact with one another. Most of the students felt like the page was helpful, but some of them cited reasons for not being involved themselves, including the immature character of posts on the page, the resistance to share personal information, or their general attitude toward social media or Facebook. Four of the students interviewed were members of the page, three additional students had seen the page previously but were not members, and three students had never seen it. Of those three, one of the students, Yvette, planned to join after being exposed to it during the interview. Yvette's motivation for joining the page was to make new friends. For her, this page would be easier for meeting people "without having awkward situations."

Two students expressed genuine excitement about using the page to find information and meet new people. For Alex, the page is a "really good, awesome idea" and she would be more inclined to ask her peers questions on the Facebook page rather than calling or emailing a campus office. As she states, "I think it's really awesome because I know that if I were to have like a really big question, and none of my friends that are going to CSU were able to answer, I could just ask it on the website." Other students also mentioned that they would be more likely to use the Facebook page to ask questions than to call a campus office. For some, the fact that Facebook is a convenient method of communication that students are already using is the

motivation. Leo, who said, “I love that page. I go on it all the time,” explained that asking his classmates for help was easier than searching for an answer elsewhere: “I didn’t really have to kind of look by myself, I just ask the page and my fellow classmates will help me out here.” Leo also felt like the fact that the forum was on Facebook was a motivation for using it:

“I like Facebook. I like how it’s just a page, that you can write on it, it’s not going through anything, I can write anything I want on there and I’ll get anyone to respond on it, and I think it’s good. I’m happy it’s not through some weird bogus other website; I’m happy it’s through Facebook, so it’s something we’re all familiar with. I probably would not go on it if it was through some kind of, you know, colostate.blogspot or something...it makes more sense going through a social network as popular as Facebook.”

Even the students who weren’t using the page felt it was helpful for interacting with other students to get answers to questions. Lisa didn’t want to be associated with the group because she felt some of the things people posted on the page were inappropriate. However, she felt if she had a question, “it would be good to have a discussion and knowing that other people are also experiencing the same things.” Geri, who’s not an avid social media user, also thought the page would be helpful and there was a chance that she would use it to find information:

“I mean, I’m not very verbal on Facebook, like I don’t post a lot, but I read things a lot. So if I was looking for something and I thought I might be able to find it on there, I would probably look for it, but I wouldn’t post a question.”

Garrett felt the page was helpful and used it over the summer to find answers to questions he had struggled finding elsewhere. He also responded to other students who had questions. His biggest complaints about the page were that sometimes students asked “dumb questions” which he felt like they could find elsewhere if they just took a moment to look, and that the page has a lot of spam on it. Karen was a member of the page, but less likely to use it, and felt that the fact that anyone could become a member of the group was a deterrent. She did not like the idea of using the page to meet people or make connections. She stated,

“I’ve never seen them, and I wouldn’t post on it, ‘cause I don’t know who’s gonna respond and I don’t want like random people to add me, either, if I don’t like them. Like I’d rather meet them here...Facebook’s fun for people you already know, but I wouldn’t like go on here and look for people that I don’t know.”

Sara, who is no longer a Facebook user, also didn’t like the idea of meeting people or making friends through the page. She feels like the chance to interact with other students is cool, but that people need to be aware of the potential relationships that they are making from Facebook. She stated,

“I don’t agree with the whole, like, second identity idea. Where you have the option to hide behind the computer screen and like, I don’t know, like my roommate, I’m going to use her as an example, like to put a new picture up on Facebook, she’ll put on all her makeup, and make sure the lighting is perfect, and I’m like, ‘what are you doing!?’...I don’t know, and when I’ve met people on Facebook when I had one, umm, and then met them in person, it was just a totally different experience and I was like, ‘what am I doing?’ on Facebook. I don’t know...and I just think it’s weird that people like follow each other’s lives every hour of the day.”

Sara did mention that she felt like Facebook was an easy form of communication since most students have it available on their phones, so the page could be useful for finding information.

Sebastian did not join the page because he only plans to be at CSU for one year, but he mentioned that they have similar forums in Germany, and thinks they are a really good idea. He likes the ease of use and the fact that you can get inside information about classes or campus from other students.

When asked if they felt the page was a credible source of information, the majority of students agreed that it was a useful tool for finding information and they would believe the content posted on the page. Karen and Lisa each mentioned that they would likely believe the students that posted information, but they would probably check for themselves to confirm the accuracy. Geri and Garrett both mentioned that they felt the answers on the page would be more helpful or credible if students posted links to resources for information. For Alex, the fact that

multiple students comment on the questions makes the answers more credible. When asked if she felt the information posted would be accurate, she responded,

“Yeah, I would say for the most part, you know, especially if you have more people commenting, and you get more of the same answer. I would say it’s probably gonna be that answer that they’re giving you.”

Sebastian agreed that there are usually multiple answers, so he would consider the information accurate. Leo felt that students wouldn’t comment on the page if they didn’t have the correct answer:

“I feel like they’re gonna, I mean personally, I don’t know about other people, I wouldn’t comment on something if I didn’t know for sure. And I would hope, with however many other freshmen coming in, like 5000 or something, I would imagine one of them, or two, would know the right answer.”

Yvette also agreed, saying she didn’t think students “would just lie.”

An additional question was asked about the Facebook page, regarding if students would feel information coming from a university spokesperson would be credible. For example, Housing & Dining Services employs a student intern who operates a Facebook page called “CSU Dorminator.” This student often answers questions on the Class of 2017 Facebook group. Students were asked if they felt having the CSU Dorminator respond to questions was a good practice, or if they felt it was intrusive for Housing & Dining Services to interact with the page since it is intended to be a forum for students to interact with one another. The majority of students agreed that getting a response from the CSU Dorminator would be credible and would be beneficial because students would know the information was accurate. Most of the students liked the idea of having a student employee respond to questions. As Sebastian stated,

“I mean, if he, his answers are probably more right, yeah, he knows – and he can ask someone if he doesn't know. He can ask and then respond. And maybe you don't know if he works, or if he's paid, so that shouldn't bother someone. It's a good thing. I mean, it's a student, he has the view of a student, he's probably the same age, so yeah.”

Coincidentally, Leo had recently asked a question on the Class of 2017 page, and had received an answer from the CSU Dorminator. For him, “it felt great” to receive a response from someone at CSU. Leo stated,

“I thought it was, it was more credible. It was like, you know, I mean obviously if I click on a link that’s from you know, colostate.edu or whatever and it’s what I’m looking for, then of course it would be credible, but just getting it from [CSU Dorminator], it was like ‘ok perfect.’ It got right to the point.”

Lisa felt that having staff or faculty involved in the conversations would not be welcome, but because CSU Dorminator is a student, she didn’t think it would be intrusive. She knew that the CSU Dorminator was a student, however, and didn’t know if all students would know that, so in some cases, she thought some students might not like it. Alex thought that having a student who worked for Housing & Dining respond would be “really cool.” Most of the students had similar sentiments; due to the expertise of the student employee, they felt the responses would be helpful and they could trust the information that the student would give to the group.

MEDIA/TECHNOLOGY USE

A prevalent theme throughout the interviews was the student’s use of media and technology in their everyday lives. The researcher conducted a short media assessment with each student and found that nearly all of the students were using Facebook and YouTube on a regular basis, and Twitter was used by more than half of the students. Text messaging averaged the highest rank on the scale of likability of media, with online videos close behind. Newspapers, not surprisingly, ranked the lowest for the students. The majority of students also indicated that they have Internet access on their phones, making their ability to interact with their networks a seamless part of their daily routines. These results are consistent with Generation Y research

findings, as discussed in Chapter 2, which support the argument that this age demographic is used to instant gratification and a need for connectedness.

One notable finding from the data was that nine of the students interviewed had seen at least one, if not all, of the online videos on the Housing & Dining Services website. The videos were content that the students had to search and find on their own accord, and several of them remembered the videos more than the Housing Guide publication that was mailed directly to their homes. The students agreed that the videos were one of the best sources of information for them when making their housing decisions. As Sebastian stated, he “just got a feeling” about his hall choice after watching them. This example of active information seeking is a testament to the fact that incoming college students are tech savvy consumers who are comfortable in their digital worlds and able to navigate through online information with ease. One student, Alex, mentioned having some technical difficulties when she had tried to watch the videos at home. She couldn’t watch all of them due to missing software such as Quicktime or Flash on her computer. As she stated, “it’s kind of a bummer when my old technology isn’t new.”

Along those lines, convenience and ease of use are important to these students. Sara and Karen each mentioned that having information on their phones was helpful to them. Email is one component of this. Multiple students commented that email was an easy way to get information from the University. Karen mentioned that she appreciated receiving the emails, because they generally emailed about “more important stuff...like deadlines.” Garrett felt emails were important and made finding information easier than a publication. Andrew, the least tech savvy of the group, really liked receiving the email reminders during the summer. Perhaps one downside to email communication is that students don’t necessarily always read the emails they receive. Leo commented:

“I always get those emails online, and to be honest, I look at them, I look at the titles, the headlines, but if they don’t apply to me, I just kind of turn it away and don’t worry about them. But I don’t delete them, so if I need to look at them later, I do.”

Students also noted that if they can’t find information, they will move on to the next source.

Garrett and Sebastian mentioned that finding information easily often means being able to find it through a search function on a website rather than using the links within the pages. When Garrett was asked what his information seeking process would be, he responded,

“go to the CSU website and go to the little search bar and search what I need, and if I can’t find it there, uh, go to the Housing & Dining website and search that search bar, and then if I can’t find it there, go to the next CSU website that would make sense, and use that search.”

As Sebastian stated,

“normally you can find it, with the Google it is so easy to find everything. Just Google it on the CSU page...at first I try to find everything through the links on the page, but it’s easier just to quick search everything.”

Sara thought the CSU website was hard to use, and Sebastian thought the websites were a bit confusing because of a lack of a consistent layout throughout the University. The majority of the students, however, noted that they did not have much trouble finding information. When they did have trouble, they often would look to their peers for help, which sometimes meant using the Class of 2017 Facebook group.

The students mentioned using Facebook as a convenient tool for finding information because they are already using it as a regular part of their routines. Andrew, who has never had a Facebook account, agreed that it would be a helpful way for students to communicate. Even students who indicated that they did not join the Class of 2017 Facebook group, such as Sara and Lisa, responded that it could be a helpful and easy way to find information. For instance, Facebook is an easy way for students to find out about events on campus. As Yvette stated, “I

don't really go on the colostate website anymore, 'cause I don't need to...I go on Facebook like every day. So I'd be seeing [campus information] frequently."

When asked if they would be willing to call or email the Residence Life/Housing office to get answers, most of the students responded that other outlets were easier and calling or emailing would often be their last choice. Karen even admitted that talking to someone directly would be easier than searching, but that she wouldn't be very inclined to call until her mom "forces [her] to call somebody." Andrew, Geri, and Lisa were the only other students who would readily call to find information. Alex and Leo would look to Facebook as their first choice. Garrett would prefer to search for information on websites first and then look to Facebook as a secondary source for answers.

Apart from finding answers to their specific questions, the integration of technology use on campus is an important factor for today's students. Leo, who indicated higher media use than any other student in the media assessment, felt that the technology factor was one of the things that stood out to him most when choosing CSU. As he states,

"I just like that there's a lot of the amenities. I mean, we have the page online, we have RamWeb, we have Blackboard; it's all very easy to use. And that's something that I believe a lot of companies, and stuff, or maybe universities, are lacking. Are, just kind of the swiftness of their websites, and it's too cluttered, and there's just too much going on, but if I go to RamCT, I can click on that, I can click on my class, and see my assignments. It's just very easy, and I really do like that. I appreciate that they seem to be working towards, you know, more of the experience of the college student. And getting in with technology as we're getting smarter with it... I love that they're understanding [that my generation is more geared to using technology]."

IMPORTANCE OF MAIL

Although technology use was prevalent with most of the students interviewed, there was still a positive sentiment towards the mailed publications, and many of the students indicated that

receiving the mail was an important component of their decision-making process. Karen expressed that the publications she received in the mail seemed more personal than online information because they were sent directly to her and she didn't have to find the information on her own. Even the tech savvy students liked receiving the mail. Leo responded that when he got something in the mail, he read all of it, adding: "I mean, if they're going to send it to you, it's probably gonna be important." Other students felt the same; Lisa indicated that the Housing Guide publication gave her information that she did not find elsewhere and that seeing an actual visual in hard copy form was exciting. Other students commented that receiving items in the mail made them seem more official than email or online information. For instance, Leo found out that he had been accepted to the University online, but didn't believe it was true until he received the official letter in the mail. Andrew felt the mail was the most helpful item out of all of the sources of information he received:

"well the most helpful for me, I'd say was probably the mail, and all the information that was provided in it. Like the packets that you would send me, or the little reminder cards – those were big impacts for me."

Andrew also indicated that he liked the mailed pieces that led him to content online. This was often the case with many of the students. Geri indicated that the mail prompted her to think of things that she wouldn't have looked for on her own: "if it was online I definitely wouldn't have looked at all this [Housing Guide information]. Or thought to read about all this, or like the meal plan stuff, or anything." Lisa also noted that the mail served as a starting point for her and then prompted her to find out more online. As she stated,

"I would have been really overwhelmed if I was just told to go onto the website and figure it out from there. This [Housing Guide] was more of an outline and just the basic thing, parts of Housing & Dining that I needed to know to dive into making a decision. Because from here, I looked through this first, and decided 'oh I would definitely prefer living in a suite style room over a standard' or just reading these little blurbs and seeing the map, I knew 'oh I want to be in one of the north style buildings because I wanted to be

closer to the Rec Center.' Umm, it was really nice for me to get this in the mail and then a few other little pamphlets that came with it...I much prefer that over just the Internet.”

Lisa mentioned that she felt like the Housing Guide could have had even more information, but she recognized that it wasn't the only source of information she would receive from the University.

Several of the students also indicated that the mailed publications were helpful for sharing information with their parents. Alex said the mail was more important to her parents than other sources of information because they weren't very computer savvy. Geri agreed that her parents really appreciated receiving information in the mail. Geri remembered going through the Housing Guide “page for page” with her parents, who wanted to be able to write information down and keep the book to reference at a later point. Garrett also indicated that he looked through the Housing Guide with his dad and it was a helpful tool for his dad to use to make sure Garrett was making the right choices. Lisa stressed that it was important for her parents to use the mail as well rather than just needing to find information on their own from the website.

A few of the students noted that they received a lot of information in the mail, not only from CSU, but also from other schools to which they had applied. Once Karen started to receive a lot of information in the mail, she stopped looking at it, because she felt like it was information overload. Sara indicated a concern about CSU sending too much mail; she knew about the sustainability initiatives that CSU promotes and felt like the mail wasn't a part of the University's “green” messaging. Garrett remembered getting a little more information than he needed, such as information about residential communities, which he didn't have an interest in joining. Andrew, however, indicated that he received “just the right amount of information” from CSU and that he “100 percent” paid attention to the mail. He even brought the Housing Guide publication with him to school and mentioned that he still references it quite a bit.

OUTSIDE INFLUENCES

Many of the students brought up outside influences that made impacts on them while they were making their decisions. These influences included their peers, family members, personal or staff contacts at the University, and the overall sense of community they found at CSU and in Fort Collins. Much of the peer-oriented inclination of these students relates to information consistent with the Generation Y demographic. For some of the students, getting positive reinforcement and feedback from their peers was an important step in making them feel comfortable in their choices related to housing and it was an assuring feeling to know that other students or friends agreed with their decisions or plans. This rang especially true of the students who indicated a sense of anxiety or nervousness about coming to college.

Peers

All of the students indicated some type of interaction with their peers related to their college choices, whether it was simply sharing their decisions about college or asking for input or suggestions. Sara, who started college at 17, voiced this theme over and over throughout her interview. It was important for her to get the opinions of friends or coworkers who had experienced living at CSU and could offer insight about the campus experience. She felt having a chance to work with students who were already attending CSU was very helpful in transitioning to college at a young age. Sara felt like she got a good sense of the hall personalities and insight from her peers, and trusted and valued their opinions. She chose to live in Summit in large part due to two older friends who had lived there before her. Other students expressed similar sentiments. Alex, who had chosen one of her friends to be her roommate, felt that word-of-mouth communication about the residence hall environment was important. She trusted her friends over

information that she found online. She and her roommate made their housing choices together, so she also enjoyed having someone to experience the process with her. Leo remembered talking to one of his “buddies” about what would be the best choices for housing, and listed his preferences accordingly. He remembered being really excited when he found out he was assigned to Summit because some of his friends had recommended it:

“A few people told me, you know, ‘you should try for Summit’ and umm, actually it was probably number three; I put Edwards as one because my friend lives in there. And other people were saying, you know, ‘Summit, Summit, it’s a new building, new AC,’ and I’m like ‘cool.’ When I found out I got Summit, I would just kind of like flash back to when they’re saying that, I was like...really excited about it. ‘Cause they’d been telling me how good it was. So I was happy about that.”

This idea of gathering information from friends with past experience was consistent with other students as well. Garrett also made his choice at Corbett because his brother and cousin had lived there previously and enjoyed their experience. Geri felt that getting input from friends and coworkers was really helpful:

“I appreciated getting the information from like people who literally lived it and that were like people that I knew. Like it wasn’t a YouTube video with people I didn’t know, but they were still talking about it, like, they were actually people that I know and that I respected and trusted. So I liked that a lot.”

Geri also indicated talking to an older coworker who had majored in her program about what type of laptop she needed, what classes she should take, and which professors she should avoid, so she utilized her pool of peer resources for many of her decision-making processes.

Parents/Family Members

A few of the students had strong parent or family influences in relation to their decisions. Karen’s parents had attended the University of Colorado and the University of Northern Colorado, and had opinions about where she should go to school as well. She listened to their

input and toured the other campuses with them, but ultimately felt that they were supportive of her going to CSU. She indicated that they were happy as long as she was staying in Colorado, and she felt she would have decided to go to the school of her choice regardless of their input. Garrett had a long family history of CSU alumni. He mentioned that his aunt works on campus, both of his parents attended CSU, and his brother, cousin, and grandpa had also attended CSU. He indicated that he had grown up as a “CSU baby” and even though he visited and thought about other schools, he had decided on the CSU experience. Garrett did not feel pressured to attend CSU and felt his family influence was a good thing. Yvette’s dad had a lot of input related to which athletic program she would choose. She felt like it was nice to have his support and she still had the opportunity to make her own decisions related to housing and other factors.

Several of the students indicated that their parents were helpful as a resource, but ultimately let them make their own decisions. As Lisa stated, “they helped me come to a final decision... but essentially, I made all the decisions because I know myself better than they do.” Leo and Geri voiced similar sentiments. Their parents had helped them with certain aspects, such as financial aid, but had let them make their own choices. Alex and Andrew also indicated that their parents had been supportive of them coming to CSU, but let them make their own choices. For Andrew, making some of his own decisions was an important step to show his parents that he could be responsible: “I know that it’s a big step in my life and they’re trying to see how responsible I can be in my independence; I stepped it up and tried to do as best I could by myself.” Sebastian also indicated that he wanted to make his decisions on his own. Since he was coming to the U.S. for the first time, he talked to his parents about some of the cities and states that they knew of, but ultimately made the decision to come to Colorado on his own. He did not want to be influenced by their opinions.

Personal/Staff Contacts at the University

A few of the students reported that personal contacts at the University had been valuable for them to make their decisions and get more information. For Sara, it was reassuring to talk to an admissions counselor and get feedback about her decisions. She had been nervous about not knowing much about her major and decided to schedule an appointment to talk to someone because she couldn't find much information about it. Sara stated, "she explained to me, you know, you can really major in anything you want to, and get any job you want after that. Like, most people just look for a Bachelor's degree." She felt that of all of the information, the conversation with the admissions counselor had been the most reassuring and made her more comfortable with the thought of coming to college. Alex worked closely with her high school counselors who helped her a lot with the CSU process. She looked to them for advice and felt having their reminders to apply for scholarships and get her information into CSU had been invaluable.

Karen had a personal contact through a friend who was an administrator at CSU. For her, the input of the administrator was incredibly helpful. She gave Karen information about specific programs and encouraged her to join the Key community and other organizations. As Karen mentioned, "it was nice to have her be like, 'I think YOU would be good for this...'" and she like emailed people about it; I think she like recommended me to some people, so that helped." Karen felt the administrator was really influential in encouraging her to get involved in programs such as the President's Leadership Program and the Key community, and it was helpful that she was "a really trustworthy source."

Sebastian's experience was a bit different, coming to the U.S. from Germany. He was given a personal contact at the University through the international exchange office and stressed

multiple times throughout the interview just how helpful having that contact had been for him. She responded to his questions quickly, and he was able to ask more detailed questions than he would have had a chance to ask by searching on the CSU website. As he stated, it was helpful “just to have one person from the University giving you 100 percent the right answer.” Sebastian was also paired with a student mentor who was originally from Denver. As he explained, “the first two or three weeks, it’s very much culture shock. Everything. So we need them.” His peer mentor was a resource who was able to show him around and get him acquainted with CSU and Colorado. He felt having a mentor was incredibly helpful.

Andrew also made a personal contact with a University staff person when applying for his work-study position. He felt it was really helpful to talk with her and email her with questions. As he put it,

“that’s the one thing that I use as my most important contact is personal contact lists. I mean, Facebook and everything is important I guess, but not in the sense if you want to try and get a better personal contact. ‘Cause you can provide longer questions and answers.”

He also felt that because he had a chance to talk to a staff person, he could trust her input since she had been working on campus and would know about the process more than students.

Community

A final outside influence that emerged in a few of the interviews was the community. Students mentioned various aspects about the University community and Fort Collins community. For Yvette, attending a big school with an athletics program that enabled her to see high-caliber teams was important. She wanted a chance to leave home and have a new experience, rather than staying in her state as some of her friends had done. She commented on the small size of some of her friends’ schools and how it wouldn’t have been as exciting. Karen

had a positive opinion of the CSU students' pride and the reputation of CSU. She had attended a football game between CSU and CU in the past, and felt that she related more to the CSU students. She remembered some of the CU students acting inappropriately, but "the CSU fans were just chanting 'I'm proud to be a CSU Ram' so that was like a big thing for me." Karen also commented that she liked how CSU was involved in the community and she liked Fort Collins more than Boulder.

For Lisa, the community aspect of coming to college was incredibly important. Moving from California, she did not know any other students attending CSU, so she wanted to feel like she was a part of the community and the vibe of Fort Collins felt good to her:

"That it's focused a lot on outdoors, and I love the outdoors... it's not in an extremely rural or urban setting, because I've lived in both of those places and I didn't want to be in those places again during school, just because I didn't want to be in a huge city, that would be too distracting, but I also didn't want to be extremely secluded in a place where I could never leave really. And then also just knowing that CSU is a good school and that they would have research opportunities if I wanted to take a part, or social clubs that I could join if I wanted, 'cause not all schools have the variety that are offered here."

Lisa mentioned that having the opportunity to get involved in community organizations and aspects apart from academics was attractive to her. For Andrew and Geri, going to school in Fort Collins was comforting, because they would be far enough away from home to have independence, but not too far. They also each mentioned having some friends who would be at CSU with them. Geri stated,

"at first, I was like, 'I wanna go here, and I wanna do this, and explore' and everything, but at the same time, I love the mountains and I love Fort Collins, and I think being here, and like a bunch of my friends – I mean, I was homeschooled – but a bunch of my friends from high school and everything they still go here and I still keep in touch with them, and I think that is gonna be cool, to just have like those 3 or 4 friends that you have already, and my roommate, I know her already, and that's gonna be cool, and I'm excited. And I already like that I know everything in Fort Collins, like I know where the roads go, so I'm not gonna get lost."

ANSWERS TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1: Do students look to the housing department's website and printed publications as their primary sources of information?

The answer to Research Question 1 is yes, students indeed look to the housing department's website and printed publications as their primary sources of information. Every single student indicated that the Housing Guide publication and housing video were credible sources of information, and many of them utilized these resources when making their decisions. Multiple students commented that having the printed publication was helpful as they filled out their online housing application and they used the two mediums in tandem.

RQ2: Assuming that marketer-generated materials are their primary sources of information, to what extent do they rely on content created by peers or friends with previous experience as secondary sources to give them the information they need to make or confirm decisions?

Most of the students indicated peer involvement in their decision making process, even if that only meant discussing choices with their peers who weren't attending CSU. Online content from peers was not as influential as word-of-mouth contact, although several students indicated that they did use Facebook to find answers to questions and make connections. For several of the students, confirmation from peers was incredibly important to aid in creating a comfortable feeling about attending college. Sara, Alex, Garrett, Leo, and Geri each indicated that a great amount of communication took place with their peers who had previous experience at CSU, and their decisions were impacted by peer input. Sebastian indicated that he communicated with his peers who would also be studying abroad in order to bounce ideas and information off one

another. Confirmation was an important step in the students' decision-making process, which parallels the discussion of the confirmation step of the innovation-decision process in the literature review.

RQ3: Do students perceive user-generated information found on social networking sites as credible? Is it more or less credible than information coming from the institution?

Many of the students felt that UGC on social networking sites was credible, although they did not find it as credible as institutional information. For some of the students, the fact that information came directly from the institution is what made it credible, so they had a hard time trusting the information found online from people they did not know. The Class of 2017 Facebook group was found to be more credible than the user-generated YouTube video used in the study, in part because the students felt having a number of students giving their input on the Facebook page was a valuable way to confirm that the information was accurate. Most students were surprised to see the YouTube video, and indicated that they did not know UGC of that nature existed, and had not thought to search for similar information when making their decisions. Andrew indicated that he thought the user-generated video was "fairly odd" and the researcher feels that is in part to not seeing information of the user-generated variety before. Several students indicated after the UGC stimuli were introduced that they would be more likely to search for user-generated information in the future. However, beyond a doubt, the institutional information held its ground and was viewed as a more important source of information for the students in their decision-making processes.

RQ4: Do students think traditional forms of marketing content are more or less effective in soliciting interest or positive attitude than non-traditional/UGC?

Yes, the traditional forms of marketing content were more effective in soliciting interest and a positive attitude than the non-traditional/UGC. All of the students had a positive attitude toward the Housing Guide publication and housing video. Many of the students found the UGC to be interesting, but not all of them were excited by the content or willing to trust the content. A few of the students had very positive attitudes toward UGC, but the fact that the content was user-generated led other students to have a sense of hesitation about believing it or trusting it. A few students commented that they would not join the Facebook group due to the immaturity of information shared or their general dislike toward Facebook. The majority of students did indicate that they personally use UGC platforms in their media assessment; the fact that the types of content shared were outside of their normal understanding of UGC could have led to a dissonance for the students and made them lean towards a negative perception of the content.

RQ5: What role does traditional marketing content versus non-traditional content play in the decision-making processes involving both the student and their parent(s) or family members?

Several of the students indicated that having the traditional content available, especially through mail, was important to their parents or family members. Some of the students sat down with their parents and looked through the Housing Guide publication or watched the videos on the Housing & Dining Services website. None of the students indicated that their parents had seen the Facebook group or other forms of UGC. Several of the students indicated that their parents did not have much involvement in their decision-making processes, but of the students who did, the traditional content was an important tool for sharing information.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The researcher greatly enjoyed speaking with the students and getting a glimpse into their worlds and the process of reasoning they use to make decisions. These students came from a variety of backgrounds and experiences; speaking with them for a short time was a valuable opportunity to get a sense of their hopes, their fears, and their personalities.

The findings in this study provide a better understanding of what types of housing marketing materials were helpful for incoming students in their decision-making processes. It is apparent that students are active users of social networking sites and other media tools; using the medium to the advantage of the marketer is the challenge. The study indicated that traditional forms of marketing content were viewed as credible and valuable sources of information for the students. It also indicated that students are interested in sharing information within their networks, and peer confirmation is an important step in their decision-making processes. Content that allows students to share opinions and information with one another is helpful as they look at a range of mediums and sources to find information. The study also confirmed that traditional word-of-mouth communication is still an important player for these students.

The students indicated that they rely on one another to find information, and UGC is a large part of that equation. Social media sites, YouTube videos, and online communication forums are used by these students on a regular basis. However, the researcher was surprised to find that several of the students indicated a sense of skepticism or unwillingness to join in the conversation on social networking sites due to privacy issues, their level of maturity, or their general lack of interest in the medium. Two students interviewed did not use Facebook to communicate with other students, and two students mentioned they felt some of the forums on Facebook were immature or they did not want to be affiliated with some of the content on it.

This result shows that this generation of students is able to intelligently discern between multiple sources of information. Along those lines, the researcher was also aware that multiple students indicated a negativity bias in the user-generated video. A few of the students commented that they felt the video could have pertained to any hall, and it would not have changed their opinions due to its bias towards Corbett Hall. They were able to recognize that they needed to look at additional sources of information for input, rather than trusting one video. This, of course, was not the case with all of the students, but it did give the researcher a sense of the maturity level of the students who made the connection.

As discussed in the literature review, eWOM is a powerful force of information sharing, and this was apparent during the introduction of the two user-generated stimuli in the interviews. Students valued the input of multiple viewpoints and valued the opportunity to share information with their peers online. Of the students who found the Facebook group to be credible, most of them indicated that they would feel comfortable sharing information online with other users and asking or answering questions of their peers. Three of the students indicated that they had used the Class of 2017 Facebook page to share information in the past, and some of their reasoning was simply that it was an easy way to find information, and they felt that by posting answers to students who had similar questions, they were being a helpful part of the community.

Consistent with research about Generation Y, the students interviewed often reflected the qualities that have been discussed regarding this demographic. The researcher got a sense from most of these students that they were tech savvy, connected consumers of online information. There were a couple students who took the laptop into their hands during the interviews to make the video expand to full-screen or to check on the WiFi signal, without being invited to do so by the researcher. This gave the researcher a sense of the technology comfort level of these students;

it also gave the researcher a sense of the nature of these students to take charge rather than to wait for a response or action. These students are not passive observers of online information; they are part of a larger online community, a community that is greater than themselves, and they are comfortable navigating and participating in the online world. It also became apparent to the researcher that the nature of these students as digital natives was to look for information online and ask their peers rather than picking up the phone or waiting for a response through an email. These students have grown up in a world where instantaneous communication is common and expected. Looking or asking for answers online was viewed as much easier than going elsewhere for information. One of the students even commented that although he paid attention to the Housing Guide publication when he received it, he felt looking at an email was easier than having to flip through the pages of a publication.

A couple of the students also mentioned their expectations of themselves and the college experience. These students were taking on demanding class loads and came to college with high expectations to succeed and become a contributing part of the University community. These same students, interestingly, were also the students that indicated they had already started making plans beyond their first year on campus. Lisa, for instance, had plans to go on to grad school once she finished her undergraduate degree, and Geri was already looking ahead and planning apartment housing options for next year. She was also focused on achieving and doing well in her academic program.

To continue with the theme of the Millennial generation, every one of the students indicated that their parents were comfortable or supportive of their choice to come to CSU. While some of the parents were not as involved as others, each student indicated at some level that their parents played a role in the process, whether that was just being supportive and helpful

when questions were asked, helping with financial aspects, or being side-by-side with their student to fill out applications and make decisions. These traits all contribute to the collaborative nature of this generation, and the need for them to feel connected within their networks as well as find meaning in their actions and lifestyles.

When looking at the messages from the University, the students were aware of the message control that existed within the marketer-generated materials; most of them were comfortable with the idea and still indicated a level of interest and positive attitude towards the materials. The majority of the students liked the photos and the information they found online through CSU websites or social media channels. They knew the information they would receive from the University would be positive, but it was also apparent that since the students had a positive perception of the University as a whole, the messages they received reinforced their beliefs and their interest in attending CSU as well as living on campus. The researcher did not get a sense that any of the students had negative perceptions about the University or about the materials they had received, apart from a small number of students commenting that they received too much information.

In many ways, the University marketing materials followed the AIDA model as outlined in the literature review. The mailed publications often made the students aware of their choices and what decisions they needed to make, as well as creating a sense of interest in those decisions. The students would search for information and form their opinions or desires of where they wanted to live and what choices they would make related to their University experience, and then they would act on those desires when filling out their housing applications or choosing their majors. The marketing materials were helpful assets for the students as they determined their choices.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO HOUSING & DINING SERVICES

After conducting the interviews with the students, the researcher has formed recommendations for Housing & Dining Services in their marketing efforts to incoming students.

1. First, the researcher recommends continuing to print and mail the Housing Guide publication, because many students indicated its importance and the level of interest they had when they received it in the mail. The Housing Guide is the first step in enabling the students to make decisions and prompting them to find out more information online. It also allowed collaboration in decision making with parents.
2. The researcher also recommends continuing to create online tour videos of the residence halls. Many of the students liked being able to see a walk-through of the rooms and lounge areas in the halls. An addition to these videos would be to add more student opinion components, perhaps where multiple students in the hall give information about their favorite aspects or features of living in the buildings. Adding a component that explains the location of the hall in relation to other landmarks on campus would be a welcome addition to the videos.
3. The researcher recommends contributing to an online student forum where students can look to one another to find information. This, perhaps, means monitoring the Class of 2017 Facebook page and contributing to more conversations as the CSU Dorminator. Having a student staff member within the department who can answer questions for other students is a valuable asset and is welcomed by the students. Also creating more awareness of the CSU Dorminator Facebook page as an additional resource for students is important.

4. To introduce a new component to Housing & Dining Services' marketing efforts, the researcher recommends enhancing parent involvement or giving them more information that is pertinent to their experience when helping their students make decisions. A few of the students commented that the rates chart in the Housing Guide publication was most helpful for their parents; perhaps by sending a short mailing or postcard with rates and reminders for parents, they would feel involved in their students' decisions and would have the information that is most helpful to them in the process. Stressing the value of living on campus would be an important component of this publication or piece of mail.
5. Housing & Dining Services recently rolled out a new website, but it will be important to continue to monitor and track analytics for the website to know what is most useful and what types of information students have a hard time finding. As many of the students mentioned, convenience is key, so making sure important student information is easy to find and navigate within the site will be instrumental in creating a positive customer experience. The researcher recommends conducting focus groups or student feedback sessions on a regular basis in order to test the effectiveness of the website and gain valuable feedback from the student audience. It will also be important to stay on top of technology trends and be aware of what types of devices students are using to access information in order to make sure that the information being presented is compatible and will render properly on the students' devices.
6. The sixth recommendation is for Housing & Dining Services to add additional user-generated components to their marketing spectrum. These components should include videos, blogs, feedback or review features, and social networking features. Students are highly influenced by their peers; by creating materials or forums that are peer-oriented in

nature, Housing & Dining Services would be creating content that is geared to the Millennial generation and that has their interests in mind. Whether this means using student testimonials, creating a way for more student staff members to serve as a resource to answer questions, or hosting forums or visit day programs where students could talk to other students who have experienced living on campus, the student interaction piece will continue to be a valuable component to a marketing plan and will help make the materials presented to students even more credible and authentic.

7. The final recommendation is for Housing & Dining Services to be aware of the sustainability messaging that the University promotes and to make sure that marketing materials align with this messaging. While only one student brought it up during the interviews, it is important for students to know that the University is telling the truth and is making an effort when it comes to sustainability initiatives. Many of the Housing publications are printed on recycled paper and include an environmental statement; featuring components of the sustainability plan within Housing & Dining Services and adding additional elements throughout publications that stress the commitment to the environment will be helpful to give students a sense of the responsibility that the department takes and to make materials more credible for students.

LIMITATIONS

As with many qualitative studies, this study is limited to the findings of a small group of interviews and cannot be generalized to a larger population. However, the data revealed in this study can help marketers a great deal in knowing what types of information are worthwhile to students when making their decisions and what types of information are credible in promoting a

positive attitude and opinion about the University. Due to the limited sample, the participants are also not representative of the larger student population within CSU, the state, or the country. While the researcher believes many of the findings would hold true for a wider audience, there is the need to stress that the limited sample indeed produces limited results.

The second limitation to the study would be that the researcher is employed by Housing & Dining Services, which may have created an unintended demand effect. While the students were given a general outline of why they were being asked to share their opinions, some of them might have held back their answers or been reserved in their answers due to the nature of speaking with an employee of Housing & Dining Services. The students were not aware of the researcher's involvement in creating any of the marketer-generated materials, however, so this helped in creating a less biased discussion of the materials. The researcher feels most of the students were giving their honest impressions of the materials, but there is a need to note that their impressions given to a staff member may have been different than the impressions they would have expressed to another peer or perhaps even a student employee.

The third limitation would be that the hermeneutic analysis method lends itself to a great amount of interpretation. The researcher has done as much as possible to tell the results using the hard data, the words of the students themselves, but there is a possibility that a different researcher would have interpreted the interviews in a different manner, leading to different outcomes or themes.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Much more research can be done regarding the mix of university marketing materials and UGC in students' decision-making processes. Gathering this type of information through

additional student focus groups, in-depth interviews, and surveys are just some of the areas that could continue to be explored. Utilizing an experiment method in which students are asked to view and manipulate various forms of materials could also lend to a wider range of viewpoints and data. Much more work can be done related to university marketing materials; marketers are challenged to continuously create fresh, new ideas that speak to their student audiences and having more examples of data is always a helpful contribution.

While this study aimed to look at a snapshot of materials related to Colorado State University, it would be valuable to continue research in this area looking at a larger sample and a more nationwide perspective. For housing marketing professionals, knowing the types of information that are effective at universities across the nation would be a valuable asset in gearing information to the student demographic in meaningful ways that can assist in helping them make their decisions. We know that students are online, connected, and woven into their social worlds – being able to tap into that knowledge and create effective marketing materials is the goal of each university marketing professional.

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APPENDIX A: SOLICITATION LETTER

Dear (Student Name),

Thank you for submitting your housing application to Colorado State University. My name is Mandy Hagedorn and I am a graduate student who also works for the department of Housing & Dining Services. We are conducting research in order to determine what methods of marketing materials were most beneficial to your experience when making your housing decisions.

You are invited to participate in this study by attending a 60 to 90-minute interview session and providing your insights related to your experience. Participation in this study is voluntary. Interviews will take place on the Colorado State University campus and all participants will receive \$25 RamCash for participating.

We hope that you will consider participating in this study and giving us insight into what forms of information were helpful to you. It's a great opportunity to visit campus and learn more about what to expect during your first year!

Sincerely,

Mandy Hagedorn

Participants will receive one complimentary \$25 RamCash card. Transportation to and from Colorado State University must be provided by participants. The results of this research will be published in a Master's thesis and shared with Housing & Dining Services. The names of participants will not be released in the thesis and every effort will be taken to ensure confidentiality. The Principal Investigator of this project is Kirk Hallahan, Professor, Journalism and Technical Communication Department, (970) 219-2198.

APPENDIX B: HOUSING GUIDE PUBLICATION

housing guide

Fall 2013 - Spring 2014

living in the residence halls



- **Dining Choices:** Residence hall students can eat in any of our dining centers
- **Get Involved:** Numerous opportunities for involvement in educational and social activities are available, from residential learning communities to organizations and student employment
- **Great Location:** Residence hall students live in close proximity to classes, the library, Moby Arena, and the Student Recreation Center
- **High Tech:** High-speed wireless Internet access is available in all rooms and dining centers
- **Live Green:** All residence halls participate in sustainability initiatives
- **Live Smarter:** Students living in the residence halls maintain higher GPAs than students living off campus, and the halls also provide consistent quiet hours to help students study
- **Safety:** CSU's residence halls have three layers of security
- **Supportive Community:** Live-in staff are available to help guide students personally and academically

a place to call home

Your home at Colorado State University is more than just a room in a residence hall. It's a place where you can study, socialize, and be yourself. Our 13 residence halls provide programs, services, and facilities that are designed to enhance your campus experience.

Whether you come from just down the street or across the world, Residence Life at CSU is ready to welcome you into the CSU community. Here you will meet new friends, take on new challenges, and discover new experiences. Whether you are interested in becoming part of a Residential Learning Community, finding the hall with the best location, or living in a specific type of room, the residence halls provide a variety of options to meet your needs.

Living on campus also provides many opportunities for getting involved. Housing & Dining Services sponsors several student organizations (see page 26) and offers hundreds of student employment opportunities each semester (see page 17).

Data consistently shows that students who live on campus obtain higher grade point averages than their counterparts who live off campus. Residence hall students can take advantage of academic resources including quiet hours, study rooms, and tutoring to successfully make their transition to CSU.

Residence Life is here to provide a place to call home.

Look for features throughout this guide and visit the Housing & Dining Services channel on the CSU YouTube page at www.youtube.com/coloradostateuniversity to hear from students who live on campus.

SCAN ME TO
VIEW VIDEOS!



The images show selected pages from Housing Guide publication.

room details & rates



Fall 2012 - Spring 2013 Room and Board Rates*

Room and board per semester – see page 16 for meal plan details
See page 8 for locations and floor plans

ROOMS AND LOCATIONS	Any Meal Any Time	Any 21	Any 14	Any 10
STANDARD ROOM	\$5,139	\$4,860	\$4,682	\$4,509
TOWERS QUAD (DURWARD, WESTFALL)	\$5,139	\$4,860	\$4,682	\$4,509
SUITE ROOM (BRAIDEN, CORBETT, PARMELEE)	\$5,547	\$5,268	\$5,090	\$4,917
SUITE ROOM (SUMMIT, PARMELEE 4TH FLOOR, BRAIDEN 4TH FLOOR)	\$5,812	\$5,533	\$5,355	\$5,182
SUITE ROOM (ACADEMIC VILLAGE)	\$5,893	\$5,614	\$5,436	\$5,263
SINGLE SUITE (SUMMIT, PARMELEE 4TH FLOOR, BRAIDEN 4TH FLOOR)	\$6,658	\$6,379	\$6,201	\$6,028
SINGLE SUITE (ACADEMIC VILLAGE)	\$6,838	\$6,559	\$6,381	\$6,208

*Fall 2013-Spring 2014 prices subject to change pending approval by the Board of Governors

standard hall rooms

- Allison, Durward, Edwards, Ingersoll, Newsom, and Westfall
- Centralized bath facilities on each floor with multiple individual shower stalls, sinks, and toilets
- One or two people per room
- Most floors are all male or all female and alternate throughout the building; each floor has about 35 students
- Super coed floors in Westfall, Durward, and Ingersoll have alternate male and female rooms; male and female community bathrooms are located on opposite ends of the hall
- Standard rooms are conducive to community-building and feature an open feel

suite hall rooms

- Academic Village (Aspen, Engineering, and Honors), Braiden, Corbett, Parmelee, and Summit
- Suites consist of two rooms, each with their own sink, that share a connecting bathroom with a shower and a toilet; Academic Village rooms feature a private bathroom in each room
- One or two people per room, three or four people per suite
- Super coed floors with three or four women in one suite and three or four men in the next suite

live-in requirement

All newly admitted, single, first-year students without previous college experience who are under 21 years of age and do not live with their parents in the Fort Collins area are required by University regulations to live and eat in a Colorado State University residence hall for their first two consecutive semesters. Credits taken concurrent with high school and/or credits attained through Advanced Placement (AP) do not apply towards living experience. First-year students wishing to reside off campus with their parents in the Fort Collins area must request a special exemption from the Director of Residence Life. Contact Residence Life at (970) 491-4719 for more information.

ACADEMIC VILLAGE	ALLISON HALL	BRAIDEN HALL	CORBETT HALL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suites with private bathrooms Aspen Hall open to all majors Commons with dining, convenience store, and lounges Air conditioning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standard hall Dining center with continental breakfast and Spoons Soups & Salads Close to the Lory Student Center, Engineering Building, and College of Business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suite hall Dining center with RAMSwich Close to central campus, classrooms, Lory Student Center, and Morgan Library Open fall and spring breaks** 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suite hall Corbett Marketplace Dining Center with late night option, connected to Parmelee Dining Center Close to Campus Recreation Center, Moby Arena, and the Intramural Fields
DURWARD HALL	EDWARDS HALL	INGERSOLL HALL	NEWSOM HALL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standard hall Close to the Durnell Center (dining center, movies, game room) Close to Moby Arena and the Campus Recreation Center Open fall and spring breaks** 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standard hall Close to Academic Village Commons building with dining, convenience store, and lounge space Near Intramural Fields and Campus Recreation Center Open fall and spring breaks** 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standard hall Close to Academic Village Commons building with dining, convenience store, and lounge space Close to Campus West (shops and restaurants) Open fall and spring breaks** 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standard hall Close to Academic Village Commons building with dining, convenience store, and lounge space Near classes, Intramural Fields, and Campus Recreation Center Open fall and spring breaks**
PARMELEE HALL	SUMMIT HALL	WESTFALL HALL	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suite hall Parmelee Dining Center (open during breaks**) Close to the Lory Student Center, Intramural Fields, and Campus Recreation Center Open fall and spring breaks** Open winter break** 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single and double rooms in suites Close to Academic Village Commons building with dining, convenience store, and lounge space Air conditioning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standard hall Close to the Durnell Center (dining center, movies, game room) Close to Moby Arena and the Campus Recreation Center Great views of Fort Collins Open fall and spring breaks** 	<p>FLOOR PLAN LEGEND Measurements are approximate and are in U.S. feet 3' 3" = 1 meter C = closet</p>

* There is no additional room fee during fall and spring break; an optional meal plan is available for purchase.
** There is a daily room and board fee for winter break that includes 2 meals per day.

MORE 3D FLOOR PLANS AT WWW.HOUSING.COLOSTATE.EDU/3DFLOORPLANS.HTM

RESIDENCE HALL ROOM FLOOR PLANS

SUITE ROOM
Locations: Braiden, Corbett, and Parmelee Halls

STANDARD ROOM
Locations: Allison, Durward, Edwards, Ingersoll, Newsom, and Westfall Halls

SINGLE SUITE AND DOUBLE SUITE ROOM
Location: Summit Hall

SUITE WITH PRIVATE BATHROOM
Location: Academic Village (Aspen, Engineering, and Honors)

Common Area
Locations: Durward and Westfall Halls (limited availability)

The images show selected pages from Housing Guide publication.

APPENDIX C: HOUSING & DINING SERVICES CORBETT HALL VIDEO



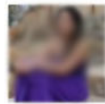
This video shows a student resident giving a tour through Corbett Hall on the Colorado State University campus.

APPENDIX D: USER-GENERATED YOUTUBE VIDEO ABOUT CORBETT HALL



This video features interviews with students who explain why Corbett Hall is the best place to live on the Colorado State University campus.

APPENDIX E: CLASS OF 2017 FACEBOOK GROUP



Malley Carmuthers

When we loft our beds do they provide a bed rail or do we have to buy one ourselves?

Share · August 19 at 9:34am via mobile

View 1 more comment



Matt Bernick depends on the residence hall. Some have ladders and a rail and some don't.

August 19 at 10:25am via mobile



Malley Carmuthers okay, thank you! I'll just buy one just in case.

August 19 at 10:47am · Edited



Andrew Harris

Do we have wifi in the dorms or are we going to need a Ethernet cable?

Share · August 19 at 10:34am via mobile

View 9 more comments



Matt Woodfield Nerd route honestly is never a bad route, thanks dude. ✕

August 19 at 10:47pm via mobile



Justin Grubbs No problem. Being a nerd helps out more than you'd believe xD

August 19 at 10:48pm



Bryan Green

Where do i find my address so my family can send me care packages and so I can ship myself stuff I buy online?

Share · August 20 at 1:57pm near Denver, CO

4 people like this.

View 8 more comments



Annelise Lynn Bottom Weird.... haha but your welcome 😊

August 20 at 2:27pm via mobile



Annelise Willard It's how's

Rm #

Res hall

Fort Collins, CO 80521-5219

And that's your mailing address

August 20 at 8:24pm via mobile · 1

Students on the Class of 2017 Group share information about living on campus with one another.

APPENDIX F: OPENING SCRIPT

Hi, my name is Mandy Hagedorn and I am working on my thesis project in the Department of Journalism and Technical Communication. Thanks for taking the time to talk to me today. Just as a reminder, you've been invited to this interview because you have applied for housing at CSU and I'm interested in learning how that process went for you. You are participating in a research study to help us improve our marketing processes.

Before we begin, I'd like to give you a few moments to read over this consent form and sign it. Please let me know if you have any questions.

After a quick survey, we are going to look through a few examples of content containing information regarding university housing and I'm going to ask you some questions related to your opinions of the content and how you may have used these sources in your search for housing. Please feel free to comment on the content while you're viewing them. I will be recording the interview so I can revisit your responses later.

Do you have any more questions before we get started? Let's get started!

APPENDIX G: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Consent to Participate in a Research Study Colorado State University

TITLE OF STUDY: Student Preferences in Housing Marketing Messages

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Kirk Hallahan, Professor, Journalism and Technical Communication

CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Mandy Hagedorn, Journalism and Technical Communication, M.S. student, mandy.hagedorn@colostate.edu

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH? You are being invited to participate in this study because you have applied for housing at Colorado State University and we are interested in learning more about your preferences and opinions related to making your student housing choices.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY? The research will be conducted by graduate student Mandy Hagedorn in collaboration with Housing & Dining Services.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY? The purpose of this study is to gain insight into your preferences in marketing messages when choosing housing.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST? The interview will take place at the office of Housing & Dining Services in the Palmer Center on the Colorado State University campus. You will be asked to participate in a 60 to 90-minute interview.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO? You will be asked to visit the Colorado State University campus to participate in a one-on-one interview with the researcher in which you will be shown a number of marketing materials and asked to respond to questions pertaining to those marketing materials and your experience in choosing housing at CSU.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY I SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY? There are no known reasons why you should not take part in the research, unless you do not want to discuss how you selected your housing here at CSU.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?
There are no known risks associated with this study, which simply involves sharing your opinions about the materials you will be asked to view. The risks involved are no greater than sharing your opinions with friends or family. Note: It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? There are no direct benefits to you. Your participation in this study will aid the researcher and university to better understand the types of messages that students find useful in marketing materials and will allow for CSU to produce effective communication for future students.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY? Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Page 1 of 2 Participant's initials _____ Date _____

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE? Your responses will be confidential and the information you give will be kept secure. In reporting the results, participants will be identified by pseudonyms only. Data will be shared, in aggregate, to Housing & Dining Services to improve their marketing efforts. We will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extent allowed by law.

WILL I RECEIVE ANY COMPENSATION FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? You will receive one \$25 RamCash card as compensation for your participation. Your identity/record of receiving compensation (NOT your comments) may be made available to CSU officials for financial audits.

WHY WILL THE INTERVIEW BE RECORDED? The researcher will ask to record your interview in order to collect your responses. The audio files will be kept confidential and will be stored in a secure location. They will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

Before you begin, you're invited to ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator, Kirk Hallahan at 970-219-2198. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Janell Barker, Human Research Administrator, at 970-491-1655. We will give you a copy of this consent form to take with you.

APPROVAL

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 2 pages.

Do you agree to be audio recorded during this interview? YES NO

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study Date

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

Name of person providing information to participant Date

Signature of Research Staff

This consent form was approved by the CSU Institutional Review Board for the protection of human subjects in research on December 11, 2012.

Page 2 of 2 Participant's initials _____ Date _____

APPENDIX H: OPENING QUESTIONS/TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT

FOR EACH OF THE FOLLOWING, PLEASE INDICATE IF YOU LIKE THE MEDIA A LOT OR NOT AT ALL, WHERE **5 = A LOT** AND **1 = NOT AT ALL**.

	<i>LIKE A LOT</i>			<i>DON'T LIKE AT ALL</i>	
NEWSPAPERS	5	4	3	2	1
ITUNES	5	4	3	2	1
ONLINE VIDEOS	5	4	3	2	1
TELEVISION	5	4	3	2	1
FACEBOOK	5	4	3	2	1
TEXT MESSAGING	5	4	3	2	1

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| 1. I have more than one e-mail account | YES | NO |
| 2. I have a Facebook account | YES | NO |
| 3. I am a member of at least one group through my Facebook account | YES | NO |
| 4. I have a Twitter account | YES | NO |
| 5. I have been on YouTube.com | YES | NO |
| 6. I use instant messenger several times a week | YES | NO |
| 7. I carry a cell phone | YES | NO |
| 8. I text message several times a week | YES | NO |
| 9. I access the Internet via my cell phone | YES | NO |
| 10. I regularly use a search engine such as Google or Yahoo to find information | YES | NO |
| 11. I have referred a friend to an online product or service | YES | NO |
| 12. I have been referred by a friend to an online product or service | YES | NO |
| 13. I regularly make purchases online | YES | NO |
| 14. I regularly post in chat rooms | YES | NO |
| 15. I have an avatar in a virtual world such as Second Life | YES | NO |

APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW GUIDE

QUESTIONS PERTAINING TO STIMULI

(Stimuli are to be introduced in order of Housing Guide, marketer-generated video, user-generated video, and Facebook Group. Questions are to be asked after each stimuli is shown.)

1. Have you seen this publication/video before today?
2. Do you find it interesting?
3. Does it excite you in terms of getting ready to become a college student?
4. How does it make you feel?
5. What don't you like about it?
6. Do you think the information in the publication/video is helpful?
7. Does the source seem credible? Why or why not?
8. Do you think the people featured in the video/features know what they're talking about?

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

1. When you were choosing your housing, what differences did you see in the mailed publications and the online content?
 - a. Did you read the mail?
 - b. Did your parents read the mail?
 - c. Do you think the printed publications matter?
2. Did you share information with your parents? How?
 - a. What was their role in your decision-making?
3. What types of sources did you specifically seek out to gather information?

4. What types of sources did you come across without actively seeking them out?
5. Did you look at the housing website?
 - a. What type of info did you look for?
6. Did you view videos or look at social media sites such as Facebook?
7. Did you become a fan or join any group pages affiliated with the university?
 - a. If so, were you an active participant?
 - b. What types of information were shared on those pages?
8. How did you sort through all of the different sources of information?
9. What were some of your biggest influences when choosing housing?
 - a. Were you most concerned about location, a specific community, where your other friends were living, or some other factor?
10. Did you receive a lot of info from your friends or peers related to housing?
11. Were you more willing to listen to their opinions about housing or were you more likely to find it out for yourself?
12. Did you feel more willing to trust the information you received from friends or peers over the information on the institution's website? Why/why not?
13. Did you think the information you found on social networking sites such as Facebook or YouTube was believable (that you could trust it)? Who was posting this information?
14. Before even looking at the content, did you have any notions of whether or not you would trust it based on who/where it came from?
 - a. Do you think your notion of trust was different knowing it came from an employee of Housing & Dining Services?

15. Out of all of the sources of information you found, what do you think was most influential in making your decisions? Why?
16. Do you have any other thoughts you'd like to share regarding your use of social media or your influences in your decision-making processes?