

Running head: TV PRESENTATION OF SELF ON INSTAGRAM

Local TV Station Presentation of Self on Instagram:
Applying Goffman to Organizational Use of Social Media

Clark F. Greer

Professor

Digital Media & Communication Arts

Liberty University

Lynchburg, VA

and

Douglas A. Ferguson

Professor

Department of Communication

College of Charleston

Charleston, SC

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Abstract

Television stations are increasingly using social media platforms for a variety of reasons. This study examined more than 4300 visuals posted to the Instagram sites of 383 local TV stations in the U.S. The analysis found that news and promotion were the top themes of the posts. Using Goffman's (1959) presentation of self as a theoretical foundation, this study found that visuals coded as frontstage received more likes and comments than backstage visuals. Small market stations featured more promotion visuals than large and medium markets. Large market stations featured more lifestyle, community and news posts than the other market sizes.

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The proliferation of social media platforms has shifted the mode of communication from linear and either loosely or relatively unconnected audiences to interactive and closely connected networks comprised of members of diverse social communities. According to a recent research report, nearly two-thirds of adults in the U.S. use some form of social media, with most of the users falling within younger age groups (Pew Research, 2015). Furthermore, the differing characteristics and purposes of social networks enable individuals to experience a wide and creative expression of the self via textual, as well as visual content.

Organizations are adopting the use of social media as part of the mix in their strategic communication repertoire of online media (Gilpin, 2010; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Indeed, one university study of “marketing executives” predicted that companies will increasingly include social media as part of their marketing plans and budgets (CMO Survey, 2015, para. 5). As compared to traditional communication tactics, social networks enable organizations to develop and maintain brand awareness and image (Gilpin, 2010), while facilitating interactivity with and among their customers and other members of the public (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Former consumers have become prosumers, so that individuals become participants in the creation of online content and in the diffusion of information about organizations and their products within social networks (Gunelius, 2010). For example, companies use social media to disseminate information that is pertinent to their publics, while creating a sense of community by listening to customers and stakeholders about their product experiences (Weinberg, de Ruyter, Dellarocas, Buck, & Keeling, 2013).

Social media have also transformed the means by which media organizations correspond with their viewers, readers and listeners. To be effective in their efforts, media are recognizing the need to exercise flexibility in adapting to emerging technologies, particularly branding activities, given the multiplicity of communication avenues (Chan-Olmsted, 2011). On the positive side, social network systems enable media organizations to converse with their audiences. On the other hand, however, is the challenge of controlling “brand image” simply due to the nature of social media (Chan-Olmsted, 2011, p. 8) that enables customers to post comments related to their experience with a brand (Gilpin, 2010). No matter which online platform is used, Chan-Olmsted (2011) argued that it is crucial to focus on the audience.

A rapidly growing component of social media is Instagram (Duggan, 2015). In light of Goffman’s (1959) presentation of self, the present study examined the way local television stations used Instagram to connect with their audiences by considering how stations present themselves visually. Much of the research that draws on Goffman’s concept of self-presentation focuses on individuals. This study extends that theory to an organizational level by viewing station Instagram posts from the standpoint of an entity and how those posts reflect the organizational self. This theoretical approach is particularly pertinent for media implementation of social media, given the fact that image is a central component in defining the characteristics of organizations and the emphasis of some aspects of the organization over others (Goia, Hamilton, & Partvardhan, 2014). It is also pertinent for Instagram audiences who are younger and have a proclivity for visual content that illustrates the philosophy of a particular brand (Clasen, 2015).

Instagram

Founded in March 2010 by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger, and released for public use in October of that year (Markowitz, 2012), Instagram is a visual-based social media app that

allows mobile users to post photos, illustrations, videos and accompanying captions and comments online. Individuals may only upload content to their site using a smartphone through an Instagram app, but the postings may be viewed on either a mobile device or computer. Users may also apply filters to change a photo's appearance (Broida, 2012). In August 2015, Instagram moved from permitting only square framed photos to allowing people to post both vertical and horizontal photos (McAlone, 2015). Photos will still look square on the individual's page, but will change to the desired framing when clicked. In 2012, Facebook purchased Instagram for \$1 billion (Swisher, 2012).

Instagram continues to experience a rapid increase in the number of users, growing from 13 percent of Internet users frequenting the social media platform in 2012 to 28 percent in 2015 (Duggan, 2015). By the end of 2010, Instagram had a million users and 27 million by March 2012 (Markowitz, 2012). As of fall 2015, there were 400 million users of Instagram worldwide (CBS News, 2015). According to March 2015 data, Instagram was second only to Facebook in users (Winchel, 2015).

According to one research report, the age of the Instagram audience skews younger, with 55 percent of the network's users falling between 18 and 29 years old (Pew Research, 2015). Given research that shows smartphone users are younger (Smith, 2015), it makes sense that Instagram's demographics match those of mobile device owners. Females comprise the highest percentage of Instagram users (Pew Research, 2015). Of individuals who use the Internet, 31 percent of females and 24 percent of males use the social network (Pew Research, 2015). Research by Facebook of 13-24-year olds in the U.S. and six other countries indicated that younger people were moving from Facebook to Instagram because they preferred visuals that

“illustrated the philosophy of a brand and not an ad” (Clasen, 2015, para. 3). The study also noted that younger users also wanted to be connected to trends and have a sense of community.

In addition to younger individuals changing social media allegiances, brands are also leaving Facebook for Instagram. A market research report noted that 250 brands studied posted a higher percentage of times on Instagram each week compared to posting on Facebook (Winchel, 2015). Politicians also used Instagram as part of their campaign strategies for the 2016 U.S. Presidential race (Andrews, 2015).

Self-Presentation and Online Expression

In his seminal work on the presentation of self, Goffman (1959) posited that people act in such a way as to elicit a particular impression of themselves to others. Rather than simply providing information about themselves (*give*), people *give off* that which is “symptomatic of the actor” (Goffman, 1959, p. 2). At times, these are intentional actions meant to convey a specific impression. At other times, however, actions are unintentional, but still convey an impression of the person.

Drawing on dramaturgy, Goffman (1959) suggested a number of concepts that correspond with the notion of a performer who is engaged in a performance. As with a stage, there is a front in which a person acts to observers, as well as a back that is relatively hidden from clear observation, and yet important to the actor. The location in which the action takes place is known as the setting. Observers then respond to the actor based on setting and props that signify a profession that is often “stereotyped” (Goffman, 1959, p. 27).

The “region” is where specific types of actions take place that fit certain standards for the actions (Goffman, 1959). The implication is that there exists a proper way to do things that are associated with the region, such as office “decorum.” There also may be “discrepancy roles,”

which is the notion of secrets held by individuals and organizations that are not revealed due to a desire to maintain strategic advantage. This signifies the importance of control in the mannerisms that one communicates to others, including what is and is not revealed.

Furthermore, actors engage in “idealization” by presenting what is expected and socially valued (Goffman, 1959). In some instances “mystification” occurs, which is the essence of an individual’s performance that separates the person from others based on distinctives of the person’s position. Goffman also noted that, in some instances, individuals are members of a team that play out their responsibilities in a particular, coordinated manner.

Regarding the present study, it is pertinent to delineate how Goffman’s (1959) self-presentation of individuals corresponds with news workers, including individuals responsible for posting social media content. There are two essential components: (1) the actor, who is the curator of posts in a news environment; and (2) artifacts that serve as the actor’s expression of his or her work (Hogan, 2010) as they correspond to the media organization’s “idealized self” (Mendelson & Papacharissi, 2010, p. 379). The question here is how the organization desires to be known via its posts. This becomes the “front” and is the content by which the audience comes to know the organization. The follower of a news organization’s social media is connecting to an entity, becoming a virtual friend who is granted a participatory role, including the capability to comment on and share posts.

The curator serves as the filtering agent for what the audience sees within the space in which the curator posts content and the audience gathers to view it (Hogan, 2010). The process is not unlike the traditional gatekeeper role of news workers. Decisions are made about where a story is placed and even whether or not a particular occurrence makes an appearance in news media, sometimes due to the perceived prominence of the account (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009).

Some events might be unknown or ignored by the media, while some occurrences might not be included in news coverage because they are simply part of a typical day. Coverage also is dependent upon the gatekeeper (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). This includes a journalist's perception of an event, the characteristics of the gatekeeper, and the individual's use of news values regarding which content to disseminate.

Whether or not to include an item in a news presentation is also influenced by internal and external factors, including the role of the news organization and the practice of journalistic routines (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). For example, one study likened the news operation of a TV station metaphorically to a factory (Bantz, McCorkle & Baade, 1980). Based on their observations, the researchers posited that the construction of a newscast followed a sequence of steps from story conceptualization to gathering story components, assembling elements into stories and various newscast pieces, and then delivering the combined elements into a newscast. Additionally, they noted that the process involved a mix of both inflexible activities, as well as some aspects that provided for autonomy of decisions that were differentiated by the particular individual's contribution to the news product.

In the case of social media, types and categories of posts are how the station portrays itself. The social media audience is comprised of followers who "respond," "lurk," and "acknowledge" the content posted by the curator (Hogan, 2010). Additionally, compared with personal associations, social media facilitate connections with individuals who are not known to the audience (Murthy, 2012). Furthermore, news workers do not operate in isolation from other content producers in a media organization, but typically within a team setting that includes a hierarchy of those involved in the process, such as individuals who establish news philosophy, editors, reporters and those who disseminate information (Bantz, McCorkle & Baade, 1980).

Presentation of Self on Digital Platforms

Scholars have examined the concept of self-presentation in a number of online contexts. One study considered the way bloggers and Second Life participants portrayed themselves on those platforms (Bullingham & Vasconcelos, 2013). Goffman (1959) suggested that people present an “idealized” self to others. However, in this study, the researchers noted that participants essentially maintained an online image that was similar to their offline selves. The individuals wrote in a manner that corresponded to the online community in which they posted content and even selectively highlighted some aspects of themselves above others online. However, it was not to the point of being a different person due to their community.

A number of studies have focused on content and motivations for creating home webpages and individual’s self-presentation. Dominick (1999) noted that most sites he examined contained links, which helped to define the person. Nearly three-quarters of the sites contained information about the site owner, but not much was actually revealed about the page creator. Also, most pages offered a way for site visitors to provide feedback to the owner. Papacharissi (2002) found that page owners used creativity, such as design features, personal information and expressiveness, including text and narrative, to present themselves online. Site authors used features to present a “front.” Hyperlinks served as a means of indicating the person’s “interests,” which were similar in nature to small talk when two people meet for the first time. Schau and Gilly (2003) noted that people’s intention to create personal websites was for others to see them. Additionally, creators perceived that their sites were a means of supporting causes, expressing personal expression and interests, and communicating with a particular audience. The researchers noted that the contents of the sites were extensions of the site builders’ real lives.

Media scholars also have considered the role of presentation of self through social media. For example, Murthy (2012) examined Twitter in the light of Goffman's interactionist perspective, particularly the notion of "embedding." In this case, Murthy (2012) referred to "virtual space" in which interaction via tweets and retweets takes place. Compared with a fixed location of a message, time and space could change due to the action of replying and retweeting. In a sense, content is "synthetically embedded" as followers retweet a message that then extends past the initially intended followers to a larger audience.

Research also has considered the relationship between the presentation of self and the use of Facebook and LinkedIn (van Dijck, 2013). People used different social media as a way to promote themselves and to portray a certain type of persona. Self-promotion was defined as professional communication, while self-expression was defined as personal in nature. The study revealed the importance of the individual narratives on Facebook, which make content "more exchangeable" (p. 207). LinkedIn was similar to Facebook, but was geared toward presenting one's self on a professional level.

Two studies examined athletes' presentation of self on Instagram. In one study (Smith & Sanderson, 2015), about three-quarters of the photos included the athlete, but just a third featured only the athlete. Selfies were not found to be a popular type of content for the athletes. The researchers noted that the predominance of personality content suggested "authenticity." A higher percentage of female athletes were shown in their sport compared with the majority of male athletes appearing in non-sport photos. Prominent themes in captions focused on "humanitarian," "family driven," "personality traits and interests," "dedicated athlete," "endorser," and "socialite."

A second study focused on Olympic athletes (Geurin-Eagleman & Burch, 2015). About 60 percent of the photos were “personal life” followed by business-related content. There were more likes for personal photos than any other type of photos. Analysis revealed that the number of likes and comments were related, and that there were more likes and comments in photos in which the “athlete appeared.” In relation to Goffman’s (1959) concepts of self-presentation, backstage photos (personal vs. sport) were more prevalent than frontstage, which showed the athlete engaged in his or her sport. In addition, those types of photos had more follower engagement than frontstage.

Based on Goffman’s (1959) work and former studies dealing with presentation of self, we sought to answer these research questions:

RQ1: What is the impression that stations are giving about themselves through their Instagram posts?

RQ2: What is the relationship between front- and backstage, and audience engagement via number of likes and comments?

RQ3: How much are stations revealing about themselves in self-promotion and personality visuals versus professional content?

Organizational and Local TV Use of Digital Media

Organizations are also utilizing various forms of online media to communicate and establish relationships with their constituents, and to maintain an online image. Social media, in particular, enables two-way communication between companies and their customers, as well as between customers (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). For example, Gilpin (2010) examined how Whole Foods portrayed its image online. Results of the study showed there were two main messages: who Whole Foods is as a company and a focus on their customers. Regarding the first

message, the “core identity” included “institutional aspects” of the company. The latter message involving the audience came through a “narrative identity,” which deals with the “well-being of customers.” Gilpin noted that the company’s different online channels provided different emphases of importance. There was one main identity that Whole Foods communicated in different ways on various online platforms.

As it relates to local television, one recent study focused on the way stations interact with Generation C/Millennials (Ferguson & Greer, 2015b). The research found that stations in the top 50 markets in the U.S. had the highest level of implementing digital technologies, including social media, as compared to medium and small markets. The top 50 market stations also featured more posts of various types than other sizes of markets. Of the 178 stations analyzed in the study, all but nine stations used Facebook and 161 had a Twitter account. However, only 72 stations used Pinterest and 68 stations posted content on Instagram. That few stations used Instagram at the time runs counter to data showing this social network is highly used by younger ages (Pew Research, 2015). The primary conclusion of the study was that many stations were not utilizing technologies to connect to or interact with Millennials.

Some prior research has considered how local television stations use social media. One study examined the Twitter sites of 488 TV stations in the U.S. (Greer & Ferguson, 2011a). The study revealed that large market stations were more involved in seeking interaction with followers. Medium market stations were more likely than either large or small market stations to use Twitter to promote the station’s website. Commercial stations featured more information content, while public TV stations had more self-identification and program promotion. Also, commercial stations tweeted more than noncommercial stations.

Another study analyzed the content of television station Pinterest sites, particularly whether stations were using the social network for promotion (Ferguson & Greer, 2015a). Findings of the study showed that lifestyle was the predominant type of content. A higher number of pins was associated with news, but community-related pin boards received the most repins. Lifestyle and community boards had more followers than boards that promoted the station. Additionally, the study found that small market stations had more pins on average than large and medium markets, but large market stations had more boards and more followers.

Given the results of prior research, the following research questions are posed:

RQ4: What is the relationship between market size and types of Instagram posts?

RQ5: What is the relationship between number of likes and idealized image?

Method

This study was conducted via a content analysis of Instagram sites operated by local television station affiliates of ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox in the U.S. Only English-language stations were included. Station Instagram sites were located by accessing TV station websites through links provided on Station Index (2015) (www.stationindex.com) and then examining the front page of the website for an Instagram icon. Station Index lists local TV stations according to market rank in descending order from largest (market 1) to smallest (market 210). Stations that did not have a web link on the Station Index site were accessed by conducting a web search. To ensure use of the most recent market classifications, market ranks used in this analysis were based on 2015-2016 Nielsen DMA estimates (Nielsen, 2015). If an Instagram icon was not present on the station website, a further web search using a variety of words was conducted to determine if the station had an Instagram account. Based on the various search methods, a total of 383 local TV station Instagram sites were located.

Individual posts on each station's Instagram site were the units of analysis. It is possible to view all visuals posted to a particular Instagram site by clicking the "Load More" at the bottom of the screen. However, only photos, videos and other visuals that appeared on the first screen accessed on each station's Instagram site were coded. This ensured that the most recent visuals were coded and also enabled simplified selection of items for coding. Four categories were adapted from prior TV social media research (Ferguson & Greer, 2015a): (1) Lifestyle; (2) Community; (3) News; and (4) Station promotion. Prior to coding visuals used in the final analysis, coder agreement of themes was tested on 30 TV Instagram sites, resulting in .74 based on Cohen's kappa calculated through SPSS.

Instagram allows subscribers to upload multiple photos into a single frame. Since individual photos in a frame may comprise different themes, compilation visuals that contained photos of different themes were not included. In addition, site coding occurred around the time of the Paris terrorist attacks. Several stations included a graphic of Paris that encouraged prayer for the city. Those visuals also were not included in the analysis, because the visuals did not fit the coding categories. Additional visuals on the Instagram sites were coded to replace occurrences of compilation photos and Paris graphics.

Following coding of visuals as noted above, categories were compiled according to features of Goffman's (1959) discussion of self-presentation, particularly the notion of frontstage and backstage. Frontstage was defined as Instagram posts that focused on news and the community, given the fact that news is the primary emphasis of local TV stations. Backstage was defined as postings that centered on station promotion, lifestyle, behind-the-scenes content, and generic visuals unrelated to news. van Dijck (2013) found that individuals use social media to

present either a professional or a personal self. The present study defined “professional” as news content and “personal” as any other type of post.

Goffman (1959) posited that individuals present an “idealized” image of themselves for what is expected and socially valued. For purposes of this study, the idealized self was assessed by compiling the coding categories defined above into three groups: news, community, and lifestyle. Non-idealized images were posts associated with self-promotion.

Postings were also coded according to the number of likes, comments and followers. Followers to a station’s Instagram site are akin to friends of individuals on social media. In this case, the followers are connecting with an entity that serves as the friend, including comments and sharing of posts. Through their comments in response to a post, followers are conversing with the station as a personified other.

Results

Of the 4390 posted posts, 12.5 percent were lifestyle, 16.2 percent were community, 37.6 percent were news, and 33.6 percent were station promotion. For the first research question then, all 378 stations primarily used stills and videos related to news, approaching 38 percent. Of all the videos, $N = 477$ (representing 10.9 percent of 4390 images), however, a disproportionate share 59.5 percent ($n = 284$) fell in the news theme ($\chi^2(3, N = 477) = 134.56, p = .000$). One explanation may be that camera images for news-themed posts are typically already in video format, encouraging the same format on Instagram (see Table 1).

Insert Table 1 About Here

For the second research question, we assigned station promotion images and lifestyle to represent backstage posts for TV stations, with 2187 (46.1 percent) Instagram posts meeting that criteria. We compared likes and comments among front and backstage images. We used a t-test (equal variances were not assumed) to compare the two groups (frontstage=1 and backstage=2) for differences in the number of likes across all posted images ($N = 4390$) and themes. Backstage images received fewer likes ($M = 52.83$, $SD = 113.92$) than frontstage images ($M = 89.91$, $SD = 181.04$), with $t(4042) = 8.22$, $p = .000$. Backstage images also received fewer comments ($M = 1.38$, $SD = 3.77$) than frontstage images ($M = 2.63$, $SD = 9.35$), with $t(3205) = 6.92$, $p = .000$.

The third research question looked specifically at station promotion. In a previous study of Pinterest posts from a sample of 85 television stations (Ferguson & Greer, 2015a), only 20.1 percent of images were coded as station promotion. With 378 stations in our study of Instagram, however, we found images presenting 33.6 percent of the total posts. Of that 33.6 percent ($N = 1477$), videos comprised 10.89 percent. Clearly, station promotion is more prevalent on Instagram than on Pinterest.

The fourth research question was answered by analyzing the types of posts by market size. We grouped station posts into three categories that are frequently used by industry and academic researchers: Top 50 ($N = 1959$), Second 50 ($N = 1232$), and Below Top 100 ($N = 1199$). Of all the themed posts, $N = 4390$, we found disproportionate use by market size ($\chi^2(6, N = 4390) = 414.89$, $p = .000$). Among 1199 posts by the smallest markets, a disproportionate share 53.7 percent ($n = 644$) fell in the station promotion theme, as compared to 19.4 percent for Top 50 stations and 36.8 percent for Second 50 stations (see Table 2).

Insert Table 2 About Here

For the fifth research question, we defined idealized images as those themes as lifestyle, community, and news. Idealized images ($N = 2913$) represented 66.4 percent of all posted images. We used a t-test (equal variances were not assumed) to compare the two groups (idealized=1 and non-idealized=0) for differences in the number of likes across all posted images ($N = 4390$) and themes. A difference was found, where $t(4276) = -11.79$, $p = .000$, and the mean for idealized images was 89.31 likes ($SD = 103.27$) versus only 40.04 ($SD = 172.93$) for non-idealized images.

Discussion

Organizations are increasingly using a variety of social media as part of their online communication strategies (Gilpin, 2010; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Compared to legacy media tactics that are typically one-way, push tactics, social networks provide two-way communication that enables organizations to send pertinent information, while also facilitating discussion with and between various publics about their experience (Weinberg et al., 2013). The present study focused on the manner in which local television stations in the U.S. are using the social network Instagram. Specifically, this study applied Goffman's (1959) presentation of self to examine how the stations portrayed themselves to their audiences.

An important aspect of presentation of self involved analyzing the types of content that stations provided on their Instagram sites. Results showed that more than a third of posts were news, followed by just under a third of images that comprised station promotion. Also, just over one in ten of the images on Instagram were videos, of which almost 60 percent consisted of news content. Only a handful of other scholarly studies have examined the content of social media as they relate to local television stations. One study, which considered TV station Pinterest images

(Ferguson & Greer, 2015), contrasted with the present study of Instagram regarding image themes. The Pinterest study found that stations predominantly posted lifestyle images, and that lifestyle and community boards attracted more followers than promotion boards. In comparison, a study of TV station Twitter posts found that more than 90-percent of commercial station Twitter sites featured news (Greer & Ferguson, 2011a). Differing findings of TV station social media site contents might be an artifact of each medium and the perceived uses of that medium; specifically visual (Pinterest and Instagram) as compared with primarily verbal (Twitter).

In his work on self-presentation, Goffman (1959) suggested that individuals have a frontstage and backstage regarding the manner in which they present themselves, much in the same way as actors in a performance. Frontstage is how a person acts to observers, compared to backstage, which is not readily seen. In the present Instagram study, frontstage was defined as visuals that would typically be associated with local television, particularly news and the community. Backstage, meanwhile, was defined in the present study as content focusing on lifestyle and promotion, particularly behind-the-scenes activities of station personnel. More than half of the images were coded as frontstage. This was not entirely unexpected, since news is the primary way in which stations communicate with audiences in their markets.

Especially interesting about the findings of frontstage and backstage were analyses that examined the differences in the number of likes between front and back. Results showed that frontstage images received more likes than backstage. Although more than 40 percent of images dealt with behind-the-scenes and lifestyle themes, visitors to the stations' Instagram sites were more likely to indicate that they liked news and community content. Despite the efforts to show a personal side of the stations' news operations, these findings suggest followers interacted more with the typical aspects of the stations -- namely, the product of their work. Additionally,

backstage images received fewer comments. As with likes, site visitors were more engaged with news and community content than they were with promotion and lifestyle. This further suggests that audiences of station Instagram pages seem to feel more connected to events. Perhaps they are more interested in news about subjects that most affect them and their communities than what goes on in the station. TV stations more predominantly offered the essence of a local station – visuals focusing on news and their community. Visitors to the station Instagram sites also connected more with news, as noted in the number of likes of that form of content as compared with lifestyle themes.

Prior research about traditional media use of emerging media have focused on the extent to which TV stations were using social media as a promotion tool. For example, Ferguson and Greer (2015a) examined whether TV stations were using Pinterest to promote the station. The study found that only a fifth of Pinterest content was promotional. In contrast, the present Instagram study found that about a third of posts consisted of self-promotion, indicating that stations are more active in this activity via Instagram.

The present study also considered the relationship between market size and themes of the Instagram visuals. Prior research found that market size was a factor in levels of interaction and promotion on TV stations' social sites (Greer & Ferguson, 2011a), as well as the amount of content featured on social media (Ferguson & Greer, 2015). Overall, large markets had the most visuals on Instagram, followed by medium and small markets. The sheer number of posts for the largest market stations might simply be due to more staff, as well as the quantity of content produced by those stations. Still, the small market stations posted nearly 1200 visuals on Instagram.

Of particular interest in this study was the way specific markets were more or less likely to post certain kinds of content. The present study found that smaller markets tended more than large and medium markets to feature visuals associated with station promotion. This is especially interesting, given the possibility that large markets are more likely to encounter higher levels of competition from other stations and, thus, be more apt to use various forms of self-promotion. However, the top 50 markets offered more visuals associated with lifestyle, community and news. That smaller markets tend more to use Instagram to promote their stations might indicate that smaller markets desire to convey a sense of community. It is possible that personnel working smaller market stations are more visible in the community and, therefore, enhancing that connectivity carries over into their social media.

Finally, the present study considered the extent to which stations presented an idealized image of themselves on Instagram. Goffman (1959) proposed that people present images of themselves according to what society expects and values. When it comes to TV station Instagram sites, idealized images were defined as themes about lifestyle, community and news. Analyses showed that two-thirds of images fell within this category. Particularly important was determining whether the number of likes differed between idealized versus non-idealized images. Results showed that, on average, there were more than twice as many likes of idealized images than non-idealized. These findings confirm on an organizational level what Goffman (1959) suggested about individuals and self-presentation. For TV stations, audiences (as Instagram followers) appear to be more amenable to content they perceive to be typical for the nature of a TV station and what it should be presenting online. Idealized images also were more predominant than other types of posts, which indicates this form of Instagram content is also

important to the stations. Furthermore, this finding is also commensurate with the finding in this study about likes and comments being associated more with frontstage versus backstage.

In order to analyze the content of TV station Instagram images, this study extended Goffman's (1959) presentation of self from individuals to an organizational level. The central issue here was how well stations were using Instagram to connect with followers, especially since 18 to 29-year olds comprise the largest percentage of users of the social network (Duggan, 2015). It is important for TV stations to connect with younger potential audience members who frequent social media, are drawn to visual content, and are interested in the philosophy of a particular brand (Clasen, 2015). The question for scholars and media practitioners alike is how well TV stations are using social media and the effectiveness of engaging audiences via these platforms. The results of this study that show Instagram followers are more prone to like news and community posts. Given those findings, station management should consider tailoring content to information that has relevance to their audience and place less emphasis on posting behind-the-scenes visuals. Although backstage content can acquaint viewers with news operations, that type of content might have less meaning than news. Perhaps stations could use Instagram to provide news and information updates from the scene to provide instant communication with the target demographic.

Extending Goffman's (1959) presentation of self to an organizational setting also provides a theoretical understanding of TV news operations from a visual viewpoint. One issue is the extent to which items posted to Instagram are intentional and strategic or random and simply available from reporters and other station staff. Future research should examine station social media content from the perspective of station personnel who are tasked with posting online content. Given the findings of this study, stations conveyed nearly equal percentages of

visuals about news and station promotion. In contrast, lifestyle and community content comprised much less of a percentage of the posts. When considering frontstage and backstage, 54 percent of visuals were frontstage, with a predominance of news themes. This makes sense, because TV stations “give off” (Goffman, 1959) the essence of themselves, which is news and community via newscasts. Whether or not station “decorum” (Goffman, 1959) was a factor in audience interactivity is beyond the scope of this study. However, it seems that followers are more interested in what the station does as its business, rather than how stations want people to see them behind the scenes.

Additionally, behind the content observed on Instagram is the curator of those visuals (Hogan, 2010). Who posts and the decisions about what is posted is pertinent when considering the different roles of gatekeepers within a news operation (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). Future research should examine the factors behind decisions what to post online. Also, research should consider the relationship between what appears in a stations on-air newscast and content on its social media sites.

Some limitations need to be noted regarding this study. One is that the analysis only examined a slice of time for Instagram posts. It would be helpful to look at station posts longitudinally to determine how content evolves over time as stations become more proficient in the use of this social medium. Another limitation is that this study only examined content. Future research should consider the individuals who follow, like and comment on TV Instagram content. This includes motivations for connecting on Instagram, much in the same way that Greer and Ferguson (2011b) assessed motivations for following the Twitter feeds of local TV station news personnel. Such a study could also seek to determine whether there is a relationship between frontstage and backstage visuals, and interactivity with the station via social media.

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Table 1

Crosstabulation of TV Instagram Theme by Type of Visual

		Type of visual		
		Photo	Video	Total
Theme	Lifestyle	528	22	550
	Community	684	26	710
	News	1369	284 (59.5%)*	1653
	Promotion	1332	145	1477
Total		3913	477 (10.9%)	4390

*Note: $\chi^2 (3, N = 477) = 134.56, p = .000$

Table 2

Crosstabulation of TV Instagram Theme by Market Group

		Market group			
		Top 50	Second 50	Below Top 100	Total
Theme	Lifestyle	319	142	89	550
	Community	412	164	134	710
	News	848	473	332	1653
	Promotion	380 (19.4%)	453 (36.8%)	644 (53.7%)	1477
Total		1959	1232	1199	4390