From the Lighthouse to the Campfire: The Connection Between Sharing Information Online and Offline

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Abstract
A recent cultural shift from the traditional framework of few-to-many communication to a more democratic, many-to-many approach supports a new model called "From the

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Lighthouse to the Campfire" model. The Lighthouse and the Campfire model suggests that information no longer comes from one source (the Lighthouse), but rather from many sources and users of the media (the Campfire). Social media use (in line with the Campfire) has contributed to the change from a more top-down dissemination of information to a more collective community of sharing. With this change comes the idea that social media users share information online, and therefore, their sharing behavior translates into offline behavior. In other words, the more people share online, the more they are willing to share offline. To test this hypothesis, 335 participants (age: 18-86) were asked about social media use and behavior, sharing services usage offline and online, willingness to use sharing services, and comfort with sharing in general. Results showed that social media use and online behaviors are positively associated with participation in sharing services offline, willingness to use sharing services offline, and a greater comfort with sharing in general.

In recent years, social media growth (The Nielsen Social Media Report, 2011) has created a new opportunity to share information. Information was previously shared through a top-down approach, using the traditional framework of "few-to-many" communication, which we refer to as the "Lighthouse" model. As new media and digital technologies continued to evolve and expand, information sharing shifted to a more communal approach, applying the framework of "many-to-many" communication, which we call the "Campfire" model. Al-

though the notion that social media have drastically changed communication is neither new nor novel (e.g., boyd & Ellison, 2007), the question of *how* this shift may be positively correlated with offline behavior is worth investigating. Has this transformation in media communication gone beyond the online world and into offline interactions? Are individuals who spend more time with social media also more likely to participate, or be willing to participate, in sharing behaviors offline? This study is the first to empirically test this research question, and presents a new model of cultural sharing called "From the Lighthouse to the Campfire."

History of Sharing

When human life was as primitive as the times of the hunter and the gatherer, sharing was used to ensure the survival of entire communities. In order to assure their tribe's long-term stability, members of hunter-gatherer tribes governed themselves by sharing resources throughout their communities (Belk, 2010). With this idea of reciprocity embedded in human nature at such an early state in evolution, the stage was set for human instinct to share by default.

Over time, however, society changed from a collectivist community to more of an individualistic one. Baumeister (1987) argues that we became this way only around the 16th century, and we did not "find the concept of the unity of the single human life" until then (Baumeister, 1987, p. 163). Though the change from a sharing society to a more individualistic society was slow and gradual, it is the norm in the Western World. However, in recent years, Americans have embraced social media and new technologies,

with a demonstrated widespread use of sharing websites and applications, such as Dropbox, Flickr, Facebook, Google Drive, and Wikipedia (Belk, 2010). This suggests a move back to a more sharing-oriented society. In fact, as of May 2013, *Pew Internet Institute* (Brenner, 2013) reported that 72% of Americans were using social media websites for sharing and networking purposes. In other words, the individualistic nature of the United States offline does not necessarily translate into the reality of the online world.

This poses the question: with social media creating a more collectivist culture online, does this collectivism translate into offline sharing? Considering the prevalence of social media use, we believe that the hunter-gatherers' habits of sharing are circling back to the offline society, potentially in large part to the emergence of social media. The goal of this study is to determine if there is an association between sharing online through social media and sharing resources in offline lives.

Popularity of Social Media

Americans spend nearly a quarter of their total time online using social media websites (Nielsen Social Media Report, 2011). As more people have access to, own, and use smartphones, the need for personal computers for internet access is no longer a necessity. Now, people use their smartphones to access the internet. As smartphone ownership increases, so too does our nation's online presence. According to the website *Statistic Brain*, an estimated 58 million tweets, among the 695,750,000 users and counting, are composed on Twitter daily (Twitter Statistics, 2016). *Statistic Brain* also found that one million links are shared on Facebook every 20 minutes (Facebook Statistics, 2016).

These tweets and links ranged from news to entertainment. With increasing accessibility to smartphones, and therefore to social media sites, sharing on social media has quickly become a cultural norm.

With improvements to mobile devices and mobile networks, the barriers to social media access have greatly dissolved. For example, in 2013, the *Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project* found that 91% of American adults owned cell phones and of those, 56% were smartphones (Rainie, 2013). In conjunction to this finding, almost 40% of social media content is accessed through these mobile devices (Nielsen, 2011), which signals that more people are beginning to access the online world from their pocket (Pew Research Center, 2013).

As the number of people who access the internet from their smartphone grows, the average age of social media users is also increasing. In fact, mobile internet users over the age of 55 are actually the main demographic that propel social networking forward (Nielsen, 2011). To target the growing age demographic, businesses have started to use social media to capture the attention of their customers and clients with the hopes that social media improve business revenue. In 2014, 92% of marketers indicated that social media were important for increasing their businesses' outreach, and 80% of marketers stated that social media marketing increased traffic to their websites (Kusinitz, 2014). As businesses realize how important social media are to their marketing efforts, more companies have begun to use this platform. In fact, 97% of business use social media for marketing efforts (Stelzner, 2014).

Popularity of Sharing Services

Sharing services are companies that represent a growing corporate segment and a rising trend of entrepreneurial business models. A reason for this trend is the idea that partially owning objects can be more satisfying than an individual being the sole owner of the object (Warrillow, 2011). "The sharing economy, in total, is currently a $110 billion-plus market" (Sacks, 2011, p. 1). A portion of the sharing economy is peer-to-peer sharing. Peer-to-peer sharing occurs when one individual shares a resource or service with another individual. This portion of the sharing economy will soon "become a $26 billion sector" (Sacks, 2011, p. 1). For example, Airbnb, is a company that allows consumers to rent out their houses, castles, cars, yachts, and even igloos. Its business is active in more than 8,000 cities worldwide, and has been growing at a 45% average increase every month (Sacks, 2011). For this reason, the company is just one of many sharing services that have gained the interest of potential investors.

What makes sharing services attractive is that they offer relatively inexpensive options for products and services for things that are difficult to attain individually. In addition, they increase the opportunities for one customer to provide savings to another customer. With the new age of technology, the sharing of resources, products, and services online has not only become easier, but also more affordable and sustainable to local economies (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012). According to Rodriguez (2013), the "sharing economy has become one of the most exciting developments to come out of the tech world," (p. B1). Sharing is an inherent feature of human nature, designed to make meaningful connections with others (Walsh, 2010), which

suggests that the use of new technologies to share information and resources will only enhance this drive to give and receive.

From the Lighthouse to the Campfire

In order to understand the From the Lighthouse to the Campfire model, it is important to understand what each of these are and how they differ from each other. In the model, light represents two constructs: information and behavior. We use the Lighthouse as a metaphorical image of the traditional method of information dissemination—a top-down approach in which the consumers are passive receptors of the distributed knowledge that is controlled by a few. Conversely, the Campfire represents a more lateral sharing of ideas in which individuals can be simultaneously producing *and* receiving information. As media and knowledge-sharing see a shift from the passive dissemination to the active consumer, social media increasingly become a key tool to promote this change. Information sharing and media production have become more accessible to the average citizen, and no longer reserved for the small elite media producers. But, will this change translate into a cultural shift in the offline world? Will the trend of sharing information online contribute to an increase in sharing resources offline? In other words, society has largely seen a shift in sharing of information from a traditional Lighthouse approach (a few hold all of the information and disseminate to the many) to a contemporary Campfire (all individuals have similar access to creating and sharing information) within the context of information. However, it remains unclear whether this model will extend to offline sharing behaviors. The purpose of this

study is to investigate that possibility.

With technological breakthroughs and an ever-growing web community, sharing has become an integral part of digital media's DNA (Schell, 2007). The internet has become a place where information can be stored and shared. Furthermore, it is a place where users can create and join their own unique, digital spaces. According to boyd and Ellison (2007), "Some sites cater to diverse audiences, while others attract people based on common language or shared racial, sexual, religious, or nationality based identities" (p. 210). In recent years, the use of tools like a "hashtag" (#) has allowed social media users to universally share and group their posts and ideas.

Many people today have turned to social media for information (i.e., the Campfire model) rather than using traditional media outlets (Stassen, 2010) such as television and newspapers (i.e., the Lighthouse model). In many situations, social media websites have provided more access to primary sources for events like terrorist attacks, riots, and local news coverage. Sharing has become the foundational value in digital media. We share private lives on Facebook, professional lives on LinkedIn, and opinions of products and services on Yelp. This sharing of information has become so common that it has created a new avenue for fixing offline problems with online help desks, interactive FAQs, and forum question boards.

In addition, most start-up companies use social media for marketing purposes. One industry that has benefited from this grassroots approach is carsharing, which has seen a 64% global increase in carsharing membership over the last ten years (Shaheen & Cohen, 2016).

In fact, there is a projected $1 billion annual market

for global car sharing companies, services like Zipcar and Autolib are taking off like jetliners (Navigant Research, 2013). In fact, Avis, a traditional car rental company, bought Zipcar for a $500 Million "all cash" deal (Eisenstein, 2013). As this example suggests, sharing companies are becoming more lucrative and desirable business acquisitions. Even future inventions will contribute to the growing market of sharing companies. For example, one *USA Today* article examined the forthcoming invention of app-summoned, self-driving cars (called pods) that will be available to people in metropolitan areas (Cava, 2015). Rather than every person owning his or her own car, people share these pods through a certified sharing company (Cava, 2015). This new invention further proves the idea that sharing is not only increasing online, but also offline as well.

Thus, we have car-sharing sites, financial lending sites, bike rental sites, and a host of other sites that are oriented toward not only sharing information about companies, but sharing their products and services as well. Even the average person can use these services on a more entrepreneurial level. Companies like Airbnb, Uber, Lyft, RelayRides and TaskRabbit offer people the chance to generate an income by renting their cars, their couches, or their time and expertise without becoming full-time employees of large-scale corporations (Hamilton, 2013).

In the past, all public information was passed down from establishments of authority and wealth for the purpose of controlling and dominating resource distribution (Bowman & Willis, 2003). Today, as trends favor the idea of sharing, information is not sourced from top down as critically as it was in the past, and information is spread

on a more horizontal plane. In other words, society is moving from the Lighthouse Model to the Campfire Model. It is progressing from an Age of Possession to an Age of Sharing. We may be witnessing a cultural change from a society that disseminates information via "Lighthouse" methods, to a civilization that transfers information via "Campfire" methods. Though the Campfire model mainly uses emerging technologies to share information, it still returns us to our historical past, with the focus on community and sharing.

Consider the help, advice, and information shared daily on the Internet. The Internet is a cornucopia of shared information available to all. Wikipedia's credibility has now paralleled traditional encyclopedias in many areas (Giles, 2005; Kräenbring et al., 2014), whereas Linux operating systems become increasingly as common as Windows. These are just a few examples of the equal footing that freely shared resources hold with traditional proprietary companies. By transcending the perspective that information is something to be owned, bought, and sold, Flickr, YouTube, Facebook, Google, and many other such sites have ushered in a new era of sharing that has quickly been embraced by millions (Belk, 2010, p. 715).

Social media use demonstrates sharing behaviors, and these behaviors are beginning to appear offline as well. By using these sharing media platforms, people can even profit online and offline (Takakuwa, 2014). One of Takakuwa (2014) interviewees stated that he "made more than $150 in Uber credit by referring his friends and peers to the company through social media sites" (Takakuwa, 2014 p. 9). Iyengar, Han, and Gupta (2009) found that there was a significant and positive impact of friends' purchases

on the purchase probability of a good when another user purchased that same good and shared it online. In other words, when online users shared thoughts and reviews on a product online, more people were likely to use that product as well.

In addition to the opinions of consumers, which are shared on social media sites, virtual brand communities can also affect consumers' satisfaction and brand commitment (Royo-Vela & Casamassima, 2010). In a study performed by Zhang, Johnson, Seltzer, and Bichard (2009), researchers tested how social networking sites influenced political attitudes and behaviors. Findings indicate that belonging to a virtual community may enhance satisfaction, affective commitment, and word-of-mouth advertising toward the brand around which the community is developed. Furthermore, social media influences civil participation (Zhang et al., 2009). The findings from this study indicate that reliance on social networking sites is positively related to civic participation, but not to political participation or confidence in government. Participation is a form of sharing, and social media use is related to that. People enjoy sharing in the virtual community because sharing in itself helps develop a community.

The growing trends in sharing consumerism and sharing services signal consumer acceptance of the idea of sharing. However, there are still some hurdles that need to be jumped. While these sharing companies are lucrative and growing in popularity, consumers perceive a high amount of risk in using sharing systems to access goods (Lamberton & Rose, 2012). The consumer's perceived risk can be traced to the fact that the buyer does not know who is sharing the goods with them, and this causes angst. De-

spite this anxiety, consumers are still willing to engage in sharing consumerism (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012), and many researchers believe that sharing is practiced as a way to strengthen community ties (Belk, 2010). In essence, social media are linked to sharing consumerism, and this sense of sharing with others develops a closer sense of community.

By blurring the lines of ownership, people are beginning to share more information online. Sharing has its own gratification of something larger than the item or idea that is shared; it allows people to transcend singular ownership, and thus build their own community. This shared item or idea becomes the campfire in our campfire model. One consumer research scholar notes:

> "While public access to goods, such as borrowing books from public libraries or use of public transportation, has been and continues to be the norm in some cultures and social contexts, observers argue that models of access mediated by the marketplace are gaining popularity fueled by the Internet, as well as by a capitalist marketplace trading in cultural resources rather than material objects" (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012, p. 881).

This type of access-based consumption occurs when there is no ownership of goods. Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012) notes that access-based consumption has significantly increased in recent years. Social media use may increase access to sharing companies, as well as change users' perceptions toward sharing in general. If sharing of information occurs online, sharing services could increase offline. We empirically test this claim by conceptualizing

social media use and social media behavior as two different actions. Social media use refers to the act of visiting a social media site, whereas social media behavior refers to interactive participation and engaging in sharing activities on those sites. Sharing service behaviors refers to the use of sharing services offline, such as using Zipcar or Airbnb. Thus, we propose:

> H1a: Social media use will be positively associated with sharing service behaviors offline.
> H1b: Social media behavior online will be positively associated with sharing service behaviors offline.

Lamberton (2012) found that growth in sharing systems has been accelerated by social media's ability to facilitate relationships through opportunities like music and movie sharing. For instance, sharing music with a large amount of people has been simplified by social media. However, regardless of this growth in sharing, some consumers fear that products they need are in low supply if everyone is trying to share them as well. Because of this, some feel that ownership is still better than sharing (Lamberton, 2012). Our counterargument is that consumers' use of social media may translate into a greater acceptance of sharing offline, in general. No research has yet connected social media with likelihood to share offline. We are testing our theory of the lighthouse and the campfire with a study that looks at how social media can influence a campfire environment of sharing information and goods. Even if the conversion from social media use online to sharing behaviors offline has not yet happened, there may be a connection between social media use and a *willingness* to share offline.

H2a: Social media use will be positively associated with willingness to use sharing services offline.

H2b: Social media behavior online will be positively associated with willingness to use sharing services offline.

Because humans are inherently wired to share, sharing characteristics are often seen in everyday life. People like to share, but there are certain rules and characteristics that come along with it. For example, people want fairness when it comes to sharing, especially in times of adversity (Zhou & Wu, 2011). Sharing is an important basis for the development of fairness, care and, cooperation in humans. Malti, Gummerum, Keller, Chaparro, and Buchmann (2012) found that children share when they feel sympathy toward someone. Feeling sympathy suggests a level of connectedness with others, therefore implying that the two sharing parties are comfortable with one another. Like children who share with those whom they feel a connection, this trait generally continues into adult life. This suggests that adults also share when there is a sense of comfort between both sharing parties. Thus, could social media use be linked with a greater comfort with sharing in general? We propose this is the case:

H3a: Social media use will be positively associated with comfort with sharing in general.

H3b: Social media behavior online will be positively associated with comfort with sharing in general.

Method
Participants

A total of 335 participants were a part of this study. Of

these, 28 participants did not disclose their demographic information and were subsequently dropped from further analyses. Of the remaining 307, the mean age was 32.10 (range: 18-86, SD = 17.78). The majority of participants were Caucasian (73%). The remaining participants consisted of individuals identifying as Asian (13%), Latino (8%), African American (2%), or other (4%).

Procedure

The participants were recruited via fliers for the online survey that have been posted in community areas. These areas include coffee shops, student study areas, community centers, and senior activity centers. A link to the online survey was posted on various online websites, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Craigslist. To recruit people who might not have access to a computer, paper copies of the survey were distributed to community centers. The survey took approximately 10 minutes to complete.

Main Variables

Social media use. To measure participants' time spent using various social media sites, we created a scale assessing how much time was spent per day on these different platforms. There were two scales used to measure this variable. The first we created and the second was adapted. First, social media sites were grouped into

1. Social Networking Sites (e.g., Facebook, Myspace, LinkedIn, Online Dating Sites),
2. Blogs (e.g., Twitter, Tumblr, Blogspot, WordPress),
3. Content Communities (e.g., Instagram, YouTube, Vine, Pinterest),
4. Collaborative Projects (e.g., Wikipedia, Quizlet,

BaseCamp, Google Docs),

5. Virtual Game Worlds (e.g., World of Warcraft, Everquest, Halo, Call of Duty),
6. Virtual Social World (e.g., Second Life, Farmville, Onverse, IMVU), and
7. Commerce (e.g., Yelp, Groupon, Living Social, Foursquare).

Participants chose how frequently they used these types of social media. Response options equaled Never = 0, Monthly = 1, Weekly = 2, Several times per week = 3, Daily = 4, and several times per day = 5. Scores were summed across all items to create a composite index of social media use. Mean scores for this 7 item scale ranged from 0.00 to 5.00 (M = 2.01, SD = 0.85, α = 0.69).

Social media behavior. An adapted scale measured the types of interactions and usage that participants engaged in during their time on social media sites (Paul, Baker, & Cochran, 2012). This section shows the level of interaction of social media users. This measure distinguishes active versus inactive social media participants. For example, individuals may visit Facebook and Twitter every day to read what other people post, but never post anything themselves; these would be inactive participants who are still using social media. An active participant would visit Facebook and Twitter to read what others have to say and post his or her own content, as well. For this measure, study participants were given statements about types of social media interactions and asked to rate whether they performed these behaviors (response options: Never = 0, Rarely = 1, Sometimes = 2, and Often = 3). Sample items included: "I re-post other people's content on my own social media platforms" and "I follow people I may not know on

various social media sites, but have similar interests with." Mean scores for this 7-item, 4-point scale ranged from 0.00 to 3.00 (M = 1.34, SD = 0.62, α = 0.77).

Sharing services usage online and offline. In order to determine participants' use and knowledge of sharing companies we created a rating scale to assess usage and/or knowledge about a particular sharing company. A search was conducted on the internet using the Google search engine with keywords including "collaborative sharing websites," "consumer sharing websites," and "online sharing companies" to determine the extent of sharing websites available online. The large array of sharing websites was broken into twelve main categories:

1. Document File Sharing,
2. Car Sharing,
3. Media Sharing,
4. Clothing Sharing,
5. Short-Term Home Sharing,
6. Financial Lending,
7. Bike Renting,
8. General Renting,
9. Coupon Sites,
10. Parking Sharing,
11. Personal Assistant Rentals, and
12. Textbook Rentals.

These main sharing categories ranged from goods available for shared access with a membership fee paid to an overseeing corporation such as Zipcar, to person-to-person sharing options such as the website Airbnb. The sharing services were divided by offline and online services. Document file sharing, media sharing, coupon sites, and textbook rentals constituted the online services. Car

sharing, clothing sharing, short-term home sharing, financial lending, bike renting, general renting, parking sharing, and personal assistant rentals are all offline services. Participants were then asked to rate their amount of familiarity with sharing websites in these twelve categories. Participants rated if they are not familiar with these companies = 0, if they have heard of them = 1, or if they have used companies like this = 2. Mean scores for this twelve-item, three-point scale ranged from 0.00 to 2.00 (M = 0.75, SD = 0.30, α = 0.76). The online measure had mean scores that ranged from 0.00 to 2.00 (M = 1.53, SD = 0.48, α = 0.69). The offline measure had mean scores that ranged from 0.00 to 2.00 (M = 0.36, SD = 0.31, α = 0.74).

Willingness to try various sharing services. To measure participants' willingness to use consumer sharing sites, original questions gauged the degree of interest that participants had in using sharing sites in the future, based on the information provided about them on the questionnaire. Participants stated their degree of willingness to use the same services mentioned in the sharing services usage measure. Willingness was measured on a scale from 1 to 7, with 1 being "Very Unlikely", 4 being "Neutral" and 7 being "Very Likely." Mean scores for this scale ranged from 1.00 – 7.00 (M = 3.46, SD = 1.23, α = 0.88). The online measure had mean scores that ranged from 1.00 to 7.00 (M = 5.32, SD = 1.66, α = 0.80). The offline measure had mean scores that ranged from 1.00 to 7.00 (M = 2.54, SD = 1.33, α = 0.88).

Comfort with sharing. The sharing knowledge and utility test is used to measure whether the variables of cost-related benefits of sharing and the perceived risk of scarcity related to sharing is a central determinant of the at-

tractiveness of the car sharing option (Lamberton & Rose, 2012). The scale was adapted to have a more general and broad scope, to determine participants' feelings about sharing options in general as opposed to car sharing in specific. This 10-item adapted scale asks participants to indicate how likely they would agree with each statement (e.g., "I would feel comfortable using items that I have borrowed from other people," and "I would feel comfortable going to an activity with a group of people I have never met before"). For each item, participants answered on a seven-point scale: Very Unlikely = 1, Very Likely = 7. Mean scores ranged from 1.10 - 6.40 (M = 3.40, SD 1.06, α = 0.80).

Results

Hypothesis 1. The first hypothesis predicted that use of social media would be positively associated with sharing service behaviors offline. To test this relationship, two hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted, with sharing services behavior offline as the dependent variable, and social media use and social media behavior as the respective independent variables. Control variables were entered first: age and education. These control variables were included because age and education were considered to be potential factors that could explain differing levels of social media use and willingness to use sharing services, and could therefore affect the outcome variables in ways outside the aim of this study. The first analysis testing social media use and sharing services behavior offline was statistically significant, $R^2 = .04$, $\Delta R^2 = .03$, $F(1, 299) = 6.47$, $p = .011$, Cohen's $f^2 = .04$, even after accounting for the control variables. The second analysis testing

social media behaviors was also statistically significant, R^2 = .03, ΔR^2 = .02, $F(1, 299)$ = 4.15, p = .043, Cohen's f^2 = .03. Hypothesis 1 was supported.

Hypothesis 2. The second hypothesis predicted that use of social media would be positively associated with willingness to use sharing services offline. To test this relationship, two hierarchical multiple regression analyses were run, with willingness to use sharing services offline as the dependent variable, and social media use and social media behavior as the respective independent variables. The same controls as Hypothesis 1 were used. The first analysis testing social media use was statistically significant, R^2 = .09, ΔR^2 = .08, $F(1, 298)$ = 4.08, p = .044, Cohen's f^2 = .10, even after accounting for the control variables. In the second block, age (β = -.19, p = .010) was a negative predictor of willingness to use sharing services offline. The second analysis testing social media behaviors was also statistically significant, R^2 = .10, ΔR^2 = .09, $F(1, 298)$ = 7.02, p = .009, Cohen's f^2 = .11. In the second block, age (β = -.19, p = .004) was again a negative predictor of willingness to use sharing services offline. Hypothesis 2 was supported.

Hypothesis 3. The third hypothesis predicted that use of social media would be positively associated with level of comfort with sharing in general. Two hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted, with level of comfort with sharing in general as the dependent variable, and social media use and social media behavior as the respective independent variables. The same controls as H1 were used. The first analysis testing social media use was statistically significant, R^2 = .13, ΔR^2 = .12, $F(1, 298)$ = 10.60, p = .001, Cohen's f^2 = .15, even after accounting for the control variables. In the second block, age (β = -.20, p

= .005) was a negative predictor of comfort with sharing in general. The second analysis testing social media behaviors was also statistically significant, R^2 = .16, ΔR^2 = .15, F (1, 298) = 19.60, p = .000, Cohen's f^2 = .19. In the second block, age (β = -.20, p = .002) was again a negative predictor of comfort of sharing in general. Hypothesis 3 was supported.

Discussion

This study investigated the association between social media use and individuals' attitudes and behaviors associated with sharing services. In particular, social media use and online behaviors were positively associated with participation in sharing services offline, willingness to use sharing services offline, and a greater comfort with sharing in general. The cross-sectional research design demonstrates a correlation between social media use and sharing, providing the first empirical evidence that social media may be a key factor in this cultural shift.

In today's economy, business owners are looking to try anything to get a step ahead. Considering that 80% of Facebook users enjoy and prefer to connect with businesses online, companies that have a presence on social media may receive more exposure to new customers (Cooper, 2013). With the inception of sharing companies emerging in the last few years, the rapid growth of social media has provided opportunity for these businesses to gain traction during a slow economic period.

According to previous research, social media participation is the most popular activity on the web and 93% of American business marketers nationwide use social media

to promote their company (Cooper, 2013). Data support the hypothesis, in that individuals who are accustomed to the sharing economy online are also more likely to participate in the sharing environment offline.

These results have implications to the business world because there is a clear link between online and offline behaviors. The culture of the online world may be influencing the nature of the offline world. With the information presented in this study, those who own or operate a sharing company could change their business models to have a greater online presence, therefore gaining more attention from the online world. According to Warrillow (2011), the "Sharing Marketplace" or "Buy to Rent" business models are currently disrupting traditional business models. This traction is fueled by technology, and the basis of these businesses is *sharing*. Information on savings, availability, and range of products and services offered are spread across social media and mainstream press. This study has, at minimum, shown that a link exists between use of social media and use of these sharing services.

One limitation of the study is that data are cross-sectional, and therefore strictly correlational. Whereas we cannot establish time order and substantiate any causal claims that social media use and behaviors online have created this cultural shift, we can offer evidence that social media are linked with sharing. Also, the sample, while diverse in ages represented, was mostly Caucasian and residing in the southwestern region of the United States. Future research should incorporate more demographic and regional diversity to further understand any potential impact of this phenomenon

Due to the nature of our new model, From the Camp-

fire and the Lighthouse, establishing causality is difficult because we are arguing for a cultural shift, which is not as easily measured. Instead, we have included cross-sectional data in this paper to provide some evidence of a statistical correlation between social media use and the notion of sharing within a sample that includes participants of all ages, and not just undergraduate students.

Future Directions and Conclusion

Although the direction of causality is not yet established, nor would it be easy to demonstrate that given the topic and chronology of a societal shift, this study has shown that the cultural shift from an individualistic, possession-driven society to a more democratic, sharing-based civilization may be occurring and is empirically linked to the trend of social media use.

Now that we have identified a perceived change in information sharing, what is the next step? As the "Sharing Economy" becomes more visible in both product and service markets (Rodriguez, 2013), future researchers might be wise to look at the perception that people have toward businesses that use advertising (lighthouse) verses sharing (campfire) to see how these two affect the image and revenue of a business. In other words, which form is more well received by consumers? In addition, because this study strictly relies on correlational data, future work should test whether this hypothesis holds longitudinally by collecting data over time.

This study provides initial evidence that the use of social media has links with sharing behaviors offline and a greater comfort with sharing in general. We have advanced a new model, From the Campfire and the Light-

house, which argues that society has changed from a possessive culture, in which information is transmitted from a select few to the masses (i.e., a lighthouse), to a sharing culture, in which information is disseminated democratically between equals (i.e., a campfire). The cross-sectional survey of non-college-aged individuals demonstrates a correlation between social media use and sharing, providing the first empirical evidence that social media may be a crucial component in this cultural change.

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