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The Effect of Social Media Addiction on Consumer Behavior: A Cultural Comparison of Spain and the United States

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THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION ON CONSUMER
BEHAVIOR: A CULTURAL COMPARISON OF SPAIN AND THE
UNITED STATES

by
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A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

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This is dedicated to my parents, to whom I owe everything.

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I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Smith, for taking on this project even though we had to work from two different towns.

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ABSTRACT

MARGARET CHAMBERS: The Effect of Social Media Addiction on Consumer Behavior: A Cultural Comparison of Spain and the United States (Under Direction of Rachel Smith)

This paper will look at the new issue of social media addiction, how it has affected consumers' behaviors and their interactions with companies, and whether cultural components play a role in this. It will specifically look at the differences between the Spanish and American cultures. I conducted literature searches from the databases in the University of Mississippi library. I researched social interaction theories, social media, The Addiction Theory, and compared the two cultures.

The second source of research I used was primary observational research conducted while I lived in Barcelona for five weeks. The observations were made at different points of the day and in different locations in attempts to gather the most diverse and accurate data. The findings uncovered the differences between how everyday Spaniards and American use social media and how the businesses use it to target their consumers. It also showed what cultural aspects affect social media use and can affect the propensity to get addicted to something. The results of this paper ended up defining the minor differences between the cultures social media use and addiction.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER ONE: SOCIAL MEDIA.....	4
CHAPTER TWO: ADDICTION THEORY.....	9
CHAPTER THREE: SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION.....	19
CHAPTER FOUR: HOW BUSINESSES USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO INFLUENCE CONSUMER BEHAVIOR.....	24
CHAPTER FIVE: CULTURAL COMPARISON: SPAIN AND AMERICA.....	38
CHAPTER SIX: OBSERVATIONAL RESEARCH.....	48
CONCLUSION.....	56
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	58

INTRODUCTION

Social media is a major part of modern day interactions, from how people communicate with their friends and families, to how they interact with companies. Over the past few decades, the use of social media in everyday life has increased exponentially. In 2005, only 5% of adult Americans were on at least one social media site, now that number has risen to 69% (Social Media Fact Sheet, 2017). The Internet has the highest usage rate in North America, with 78.6% of the population, Oceania is second, with 67.6%. Europe is the third highest, with 63.2% (Gamboa, 2014). In general, social media use has been characterized by Millennials and their overwhelming presence on the sites. However even 80% of Americans ages 30-49 and 64% of Americans from 50-64 use social media, making it a part of almost every age group (Social Media Fact Sheet, 2017). 90% of American adults use social media every day and 24% of adolescents are on social media “almost constantly” (Perrin, 2015; Lenhart, 2015). The spread of social media use across generations has caused it to become a new force in society. This rapid and drastic change in societal interactions has also affected how people interact and communicate with one another.

Businesses use social media as a cheap and effective marketing tool. It allows the companies to better communicate with their consumers. Company use of social media increases consumer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and consumer awareness of brands. Social media affects up to 47% of millennials purchases (Roesler, 2015). However

millennials are not the only people affected by social media. Data suggest that one in three overall American consumers' purchases are affected by social media. Consumers that avidly use social media and let it affect their buying habits are likely to spend four times more money than consumers not affected by social media. This means that someone who uses social media regularly to find products that interest them, spend four times more money than other consumers. Along with an effect on overall consumer behaviors, social media affects each product category differently. For example, a clothing boutique targeting young women will have a different relationship with social media advertising than a senior living home that attempts to target elders. Companies must pay attention to the different effects in their product categories to maximize their profits and better their marketing strategy towards their target market.

Social media is a practice that can be used on a regular basis with normal effects, but can also be taken too far in an addictive manner. Addiction is a part of every society and it is usually centered around negative practices, but sometimes it is a commonplace practice that people take too far (Nutt, 2013). Each society has different addictive properties. Along with an extreme societal shift such as the Internet boom, there also comes behavioral changes within the society. An America survey was conducted where 54% of all respondents and 75% of millennials said that they feel some level of addiction to their social media accounts (Cabral, 2011). This excessive usage of social media is always perpetuated by the popularization and continual development of mobile devices. These devices make the Internet and social media accessible at all times, and help support the relationships and communication connections created by the media sites (Kim, 2016). This addiction can lead to neglect of one's real life, mood change and mental

preoccupation. The addictive aspect of social media has the potential to also be a factor in how social media affects consumer behavior (Scheinbaum, 2017).

Since social media has such a strong effect on consumers behaviors and their personal lives, its effects can also change related to culture. Different cultures have different uses for social media, as well as different characteristics of consumers and businesses (Poushter, 2017). Addiction is a human trait that spreads across many different cultures. Western cultures are the most adept to social media due to the fact that they have the most technological advances; however, other countries around the world such as South Korea, Russia and Brazil, are also relevant in the social media world. Although the penetration is not high, at over 1 billion, Asia has the highest number of Internet users (Gamboa, 2014). The differences in the countries uses of social media can also be based off of their cultural characteristics and traditions. Spain and the United States are both westernized countries but they have different traditions and expectations. A culture's propensity to addiction affects their use of social media and subsequently their consumer behavior.

This paper will explore how addictive behaviors that are related to social media use effects consumer buying behaviors, specifically in the Spanish and American cultures. It will compare Spanish and American millenials and their social media habits, along with their consumer behaviors and how addiction might play a role. It will first look at social media theories and how they affect societal behavior, then dive deeper into the addiction theory and what causes someone to be at risk for addiction. Social media addiction and social media's role in businesses and consumers behaviors will give a background for how an addiction to social media may affect consumers buying

behaviors. Hofstede's dimensions will also be discussed in regard to America and Spain, along with being used to make predictions about the differences between the two cultures and potential effects that has these differences have. Lastly, using observational research from Barcelona, I will do a cultural analysis to compare the propensity for addiction with social media use and consumer habits in either country to determine to likelihood of effect. This leads me to my conclusions, which are based on the research of social media, addiction and cultural differences of Spain and America, along with the observational research I conducted in Barcelona.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a new platform that has been considered the cause of major changes to our society and how the world does business. The definition of social media is “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and allow the creation and exchange of user generated content” (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010, pg. 61). However, interaction in this way, isn’t completely a new thing. In Jose van Dijck’s “Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media”, she discusses how humans have always had an innate need for connection and connectivity, and subsequently was always creating new ways of connecting (Dijck, 2013). The first defined “social media” site was created in 1997 and was called “Six Degrees”. It was the first to create the idea of making a profile of yourself and “adding” other members to be your friends, essentially creating a unique virtual network. In 2002 Friendster followed, and then in 2004 the powerhouse Facebook was officially launched (Colaiacovo, 2016). MySpace claimed its spot as the largest social network site from 2005-2008, and had a large role in popularizing social media . Today Facebook has 1.8 billion users worldwide (Chaffey, 2017). 2005 gave us YouTube, closely followed by Twitter in 2006. 2010 was the year for Pinterest and Instagram, and 2011 was the launch of Snapchat (Colaiacovo, 2016). The dates of the social media leaders launches shows how fast the industry moved and expanded, along with the drastic effect it had on society and how people interacted with one another. The sites listed above are considered the

major social media sites, but smaller and less popular sites were consistently being created in between the launches of these main sites.

Social media is unique from other forms of mass media because it has many different communication styles, and all the communication is done instantaneously. Social media contains aspects of multiple communication theories, including: one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many. The One-to-One communication theory demonstrates when there is a relationship only between two separate entities, but information flows only to those entities (Balbi, 2016). Social media is not often a One-to-One platform, as the people on it have many different “followers” and interactions with other people. However the direct messages and chats that are offered by most social media sites are considered One-to-One as they take place between only two participants. It allows for there to be one sender and one receiver of the information. Snapchat is a great example of the One-to-One communication theory over social media. Users have the option of posting a Snapchat story for all of their friends to view or creating a group Snapchat message, which involves more than just one information receiver (Roberts, 2017). Still, there are 400 million snaps that have been sent and 88% of those are sent from one individual to another (Mulshine, 2015). This individual sending encompasses the One-to-One theory.

The One-to-Many theory generally applies to traditional mass media. It is defined by one sender and many receivers of the information provided by the sender. A news outlet would publish the information and many consumers would receive the information. The identity of the sender or the reader does not have to be known. Individuals social media profiles can also demonstrates this type of communication. When someone posts a

text post or a picture to their profile on any social media, they are the singular sender of information and all of their followers receive the information (Peters, 1998). This theory was also commonly used by businesses, as the firm would release the information and it would be received by many consumers (Peters, 1998). The biggest shift that social media has created in societal communication is the shift from One-to-Many towards Many-to-Many (Ngai, et al., 2015).

The Many-to-Many communication paradigm is the basis of internet interaction to date. Anyone can receive and distribute information through the internet. This type of communication require multiple different users on either end of the communication chain (Pettersen, 2012). An aspect of this communication theory in relation to the Internet is the ability to share information across sites. In social media, you can “Share” articles and posts across social media sites, as well as “tag” people in posts (Ngai, et al., 2013). The sharing of media across sites created a new abilities for a member to provide information to other members. This specific use of social media diffuses information faster through the members of a society and creates more of discussion among members.

These changes in society and communication have led businesses to have to adapt and integrate social media into their business plans to help stay relevant. Businesses have grown to start using social media for external and internal uses (Arnaboldi, 2016). The external users targeted by the firm’s social media practices are part of the company's target market and they use each person’s private networks on social media as a place to market their firm (Arnaboldi, 2016). 89% of companies use Facebook as their number one external social media source and LinkedIn was their second at 83% (Mangles, 2017). Social media has also been used to increase communication and spread information

internally in companies between their employees. Some companies create their own internal social media outlets, as opposed to using ones that are already provided for them.

In sum, social media has had a forever altering effect on how we communicate as individual societies and on a global scale. This shift has created changes in businesses, consumers and cultures. The change in societal structure could be so large in the future, more societies could begin to blend together. The new force that social media has initiated will also be analyzed and used to determine the effect it has on addiction, as well as consumer behavior. However, the extent to which social media has permeated a society can depend on the culture and certain aspects of the culture. This will be explored further.

ADDICTION THEORY

For as long as we know, humans have always struggled with addictions. References to addiction have made as far back as Ancient Greece, when there were writings of drinking alcohol affecting the Kings in negative ways (Dewey, 1893). The most widely known types of addictions are to alcohol and drugs. The desires that cause addiction can be based on physiological reactions by the body, but not all addiction requires those responses. Technically, addiction is an abstract thing, as it is related to human emotions and cannot be seen as a physical object (West, 2013). Addiction has been studied over centuries due to its complicated nature and consequently there has been a struggle to create an all-encompassing definition of what addiction truly is. At first addiction was seen as a moral failing, then with more examination it eventually came to light that addiction was a medical disease as opposed to just a character flaw (West, 2013).

The original definition of addictions were centered around drugs and alcohol, highlighting the fact that stopping usage of them led to physiological symptoms. Recently, the definition has shifted to be related to the impairment of a person's judgement about a specific behavior that may have negative effects to them, even though they may have a desire to abstain from the behavior (West, 2013). To create a definition for addiction, there is a need to distinguish between the definition of addiction and dependence. "Dependence" is a term related to a person's physical state, and their need to use a substance in order to not experience withdrawal symptoms. A person who needs alcohol in order to avoid getting a headache and the sweats is physically dependent on

alcohol. “Addiction” is a strong motivation to participate in a behavior that may be damaging, but has some type of reward for that person (West, 2013). Reward is an important part of addiction, as there must be positive effect for the person to continue the behavior. This cause of addiction will be telling about a culture and their likelihood for addiction, based on their reward system and how it affects their behaviors. A culture with a stronger reward system can be more at risk for addiction.

Even with the shift of definition of addiction over the years, there are still many working definitions for the disease today, and each one depends on the situation in which it is being used. The main difference in the definitions are how the effects on the body, the requirement for treatment, and the basis of the habit or substance on which the addiction is based. For the purpose of this thesis, the definition for addiction used will be “Compulsive physiological and psychological need for a habit-forming substance or the condition of being habitually or compulsively occupied with or involved in something”. The term “craving” also plays a part in addiction, as the terms are sometimes used synonymously. Individuals may have the “desire” or “urge” to use social media, which fall under the definition for a craving. Craving and addiction are distinct from each other due to level of strength of need. Though there are different types of addiction, the type most related to social media addiction is called process addiction. Process addiction is a type of addiction centers around activities, such as gambling, shopping, and eating, instead of substances, such as alcohol and drugs (West, 2013). The process may be different, meaning a behavior versus a substance, but both cause the same reward system within the brain. Process addiction commonly lines up with behavioral addiction, which is when a person has an overpowering urge to participate in a behavior, despite its

negative consequences (Willingham, 2012). An example of behavioral addiction would be when a person has such a strong desire to spend hours on their social media sites that they are fired from their job for lack of productivity and focus. A society's activity levels can affect what the people are addicted to, depending on what they are more likely to participate in. For example, if the Spanish are a more activity based culture, they may be more likely to be addicted to the activity of social media surfing and posting. Whereas Americans may have a lower likelihood of being addicted to these activities if they do not have as much of an activity based society.

Addictions are consistently obscured. Occasionally there is an obvious addiction that is well-known, but other times the addiction is less obvious to the rest of society. The theory of addiction is based around the fact that addiction is so difficult to pinpoint. Each case of addiction is different and depends on what the addiction is based.. It can contain elements of motivation, desires, impulses, identity, habits and emotional attachment, however it cannot be solely defined off of any one of these factors (West, 2013). The activities that are considered most addictive are the ones that are already considered unhealthy or imbalanced. Excessively drinking alcohol or using harmful drugs are activities that place the user in negative situations, but there was already an imbalance that caused that decision to be made. The propensity to get addicted is only partially inherited, as you can develop an addiction when no one else in your family is an addict, as well as it is possible for someone to avoid becoming addicted even if it runs in their family. Addiction is commonly affected by environmental factors and these factors can be unique to each individual. Some examples of factors included stress factors, economic factors, personal goals, and society's expectations (West, 2013). An individual's age is a

major factor in the probability of developing an addiction to something that causes addictions. Someone who is younger is more susceptible to addiction (West, 2013). Not only do these factors affect the propensity to become addicted but they also have an effect on the individual's ability to recover from the addiction. Americans, especially millennials, have a reputation for "growing up late". While they may be physiologically the same age as Spaniards, this could increase young Americans risk of developing a social media addiction. If the environmental factors have a stronger push towards addiction, then the individual is less likely to be able to resist the addiction and abstain from the behavior. Often time this, along with the perceived positive effect of the behavior, is the cause for relapses (West, 2013). Because environmental factors play such a large role in the causes of addiction, social media has become a large factor due to its ubiquitous nature. Someone who is mildly addicted to social media will see it everywhere and that will have an effect on deepening the addiction, a strong example of the environment pushing towards addiction and the individual failing to resist. This can also make it easier for the addiction to go unnoticed, since more of the population uses social media in a great capacity. This can also come into play with companies pushing their social media advertisements on consumers and how it has the ability to increase their social media usage.

There are three different types of addiction theories that have been defined. Each theory is different but it is hard to pinpoint addictive behavior into one specific theory. The first theory is the Genetics Theory of Addiction. This theory is based around the fact that the propensity to get addicted to something comes from our genetics, similar to how alcoholism running in the family. Genetic addiction theory data is strongly based around

alcoholic statistics, but the theory can extend to all types of addictions. Studies done by a researcher named Vaillant yielded results consistent with the fact that addiction is genetic (Vaillant, 1985). Using a sample of subjects from an inner city, Vaillant discovered that someone with alcoholic relatives was three to four times more likely to become an alcoholic, as well as an individual that has alcoholic relatives but is not raised near their relatives is two times as likely to become an alcoholic (Vaillant, 1985). His study also showed signs of genetic addiction though different ethnic groups. For example, the study found that people of Irish American heritage were seven times more likely to be alcoholics than people of Mediterranean descent (Vaillant, 1985). There is also evidence that men are more likely to become addicts than women, causing the genetic addiction theory to extend to a gender based relationship as well (Cloninger, 1978).

Along with addiction being hereditary, another part of the genetic theory focuses on the genetic makeup it takes for someone to become an addict. There is support behind the theory that there is something different in addicts genetic makeup that causes them to have a different reaction the first time they are exposed to a stimulant. For example, a person with a stronger likelihood to become an alcoholic can be affected by a lower ability to detect their BAC. As in the individual can not tell when they are being affected by the alcohol in the same capacity as everyone else, therefore they end up drinking more to feel the same effects as everyone else. This may be due to a difference in the way their body metabolizes the alcohol (Goodwin, 1986). This theory has raised questions due to the fact that it is based around genetic makeup that may cause someone to react differently to a stimulus, yet the person does not do anything to counteract or stop the stimulus from affecting them. It then subsequently becomes a damaging part of their

lives. It was also found that an alcoholic that was able to abstain from alcohol was then more likely to become addicted to another substance, verifying that they are predisposed to be addicts (Vaillant, 1985).

Along with a predisposition to be an alcoholic, there are theories about susceptibility to obesity, addiction to relationships and a genetic makeup to increase addiction to narcotics that also support the genetic addiction theory. Similar to the addiction of alcohol being related to a lack of stimulus threshold, obesity and addiction to eating can be related to a person's inability to register their own inner physiological signals. For example, they rely on external signs to tell them if they should eat or not, not their own hunger levels (Schachter, 1968). There are more theories that people can have a chemical imbalance in their brain that causes them to be addicted to unhealthy relationships with other people and can experience manic-depressive like symptoms (Liebowitz, 1984). All of these theories come together to compile evidence for the genetic addiction theory. The genetic theory could have a place around social media addiction through the claim that people who are more self-conscious and reliant on others are more likely to be addicted to the internet and media.

ADHD was identified as a factor in an individual's ability to be addicted as well, claiming that it the addictive behavior helps to calm their hyperactivity. This addiction correlation has mainly been found between online gaming addictions and not addictions to social media. 5% of children in the United States have ADHD (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2017). It is estimated that 6.8% of children in Spain have ADHD (Catala-Lopez, et. al, 2012). Obsessive compulsive disorder is also shown to be linked to addictive behaviors, as both OCD and addiction to technology involve obsessive

behaviors and low impulse control. 2.3% of the American population is affected by OCD (Facts About Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, 2018). There is not a large difference between the two countries when it comes to such psychiatric disorders, so these diseases should not have a large effect on social media addiction and consumer behavior in each culture.

However, not all scientists support the genetic addiction theory, some philosophize that the Theory of Exposure is a more accurate description of what causes addiction. The Theory of Exposure is then broken down further, into the Conditioning Theory and the Biological Theory. The basis for these theories is not hereditary factors that causes addiction, but the event itself when the individual reacts with the stimulus. These theories claim that addiction solely relates to what the brain processes and experiences, not on any internal processes. This is to say that the substance causes addiction the disease because of the reinforcements provided by the experience with the trigger. According to the Conditioning Exposure Theory, if a person uses a narcotic drug over and over again, addiction is inevitable no matter what their genetic makeup is. The true cause for the addiction is the rewards the individual gets from participating in the addicting act. While this part of the theory begs the question of what causes users to start demonstrating the behavior to become addicted, this relationship demonstrates the dependence due to the endorphin levels. Part of the genetic theory conjectures that naturally lower endorphin levels can cause people to be predisposed to addiction but the exposure theory states that anyone will get addicted to the rewards from the higher endorphin levels, if they continue to choose to participate in the action. The rewards from the addictive behavior can be two fold- avoiding the uncomfortable feelings of

withdrawal from the stimulant and the pleasure received from the experience (Soloman, 1980). A major issue with the conditioning model is that some research shows that people have a pleasant experience upon the first time use of a drug, but then became addicted to it anyways, which questions what caused them to continue using the drug. Some research has even shown the postoperative patients in hospitals start taking less narcotics over time because they do not like the drugs, this also causes some ambiguity to the conditioned exposure theory (Bennett, 1982). The continuous use aspect of the conditioning model applies to social media addiction because people are not addicted when they first start using social media, but then through nonstop use and the rewards felt from the use, it then becomes an addictive behavior. Perceived conditional value comes from a specific situation related to the social media use, such as a birthday or holiday. The more the perceived value the consumer has, the more likely they are to continue use (Hallikainen, 2014).

The Biological Theory of Exposure is similar to the Conditioning Theory in that it also asserts that the repetitive use of something causes it to become an addictive behavior. The difference between the two theories centers around the fact that the Biological Theory claims the the reason for addiction is due to biological reactions in the body that cause the positive rewards for the behavior and the negative effects of the withdrawal. The main cause behind this is the release of the hormone named endorphin. Drugs and alcohol that cause addictions are theorized to mimic endorphins when creating pleasure through usage, causing the natural release of endorphins to lower (Goldstein, 1976). The use of the drug is the only thing that will cause the endorphin levels to rise again, thus causing the pleasure response as well as the withdrawal symptoms. The

metabolic absorption rate of the drug will adapt to the amount of the drug being taken, causing more of the drug to be needed to avoid the withdrawal symptoms. The endorphin release component of this theory means it can be applied to almost anything, outside of just drugs and alcohol. Endorphins can be released by running, overeating, cigarettes, and more (Peele, 1981). Social media usage could fall into this category because it causes release of high levels of endorphins, creating a need for people to engage in that behavior to get those levels of pleasure again (Gathercoal, 1999).

The addiction statistics for America are more complete than the addiction statistics for Spain. Over 20 million Americans, that are age 12 and older, are addicted to something other than tobacco (“Addiction Statistics - Facts on Drug and Alcohol Addiction.”). Spain had 455 overdose deaths related to drugs or alcohol in 2014 and 411, 157 people were charged with drug offenses. Spain has a bigger issue with drug trafficking because it is the link between Europe and Morocco, a giant exporter of marijuana and cocaine. Although the definition of addiction states that it has to negatively impact the individual’s life, those traits are sometimes hard to identify, even if you think you know the person well. This fact was brought to light by an organization named Addict Aide (Hunt, 2016). The ad agency created an Instagram account for a fake model named Louise Delage. The account gained over 65,000 followers in a short period of time and accumulated over 50,000 likes on all of the account’s pictures. However, every single picture that was posted on the account featured alcohol in it. The pictures ranged from lounging by the pool with wine to fancy dinners with cocktails. The account featured 150 photos and the purpose was to raise awareness of how common it is for young people to post pictures with alcohol and no one to notice it becoming a problem.

The last post on the account was a video that revealed the reason behind the account and the caption “Like My Addiction” (Hunt, 2016). This awareness campaign demonstrates how hard it can be to detect addiction, especially within millennials. The addiction can manifest as a normal behavior on the outside, but when investigated further it is a serious problem. This use of social media to demonstrate this fact is eye-opening, because social media addiction is the most common type of addiction to be hidden behind actions that may seem “normal” or hard to detect.

Addiction is a disease that can manifest in many different ways. This study will focus on the process and gratification factors of addiction the most, meaning what activities and rewards are the strongest causes for social media addiction. They activities and rewards can potentially then be linked back to differences within a culture, as well as be the causes for changes in consumers behaviors within that society. While it is difficult to fully pinpoint, making it difficult to acquire data on, it is a increasingly growing problem in today’s world.

SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION

Social media addiction, specifically, is something that has been hard to define. There is a fine line between the difference of heavy social media use and a true addiction to the internet and its social media websites. “Internet addiction”, also known as internet addiction disorder, is the main overarching term used to describe addiction to internet video games, social media sites, online gambling, etc. Social media addiction falls into the category of internet addiction. Internet addiction is listed as one of the top ten addiction types (Rhea, 2003). Social media has been stated to be a cause of the exasperation of Internet in recent years. Media addiction can be linked to use of television and console video games, however those addictions are not as intrusive to the victims’ life as internet and social media addiction (Song, 2004). However the compulsion and potential addiction to the feeling of connecting and broadcasting isn’t new to our culture. Dr. Vicky Wyatt claims that it is a manifestation of obsessive compulsive disorder, in which a compulsion appears for a certain behavior due to the behaviors ability to cause relaxation and release anxiety (Rhea, 2003).

Even though the true definition of an internet addict is ambiguous, the behaviors that are associated with internet addicts are dependence, obsessive thoughts, lowered impulse control, inability to stop and withdrawal (Song, 2004). The problem with media addiction is that someone can be mildly addicted to the internet and show signs of some of the behaviors, without the behaviors causing problems in their everyday life. This

causes discrepancy in their definition of addiction, because technically the internet usage has to cause issues in one's life to be considered a true addiction. Someone can be browsing social media for hours on end but it is not considered an addicted until they are dependant on it. The usage of certain media sites creates feelings of gratifications for the user and thus causing a conditioned behavior of using the media (Song, 2004).

The gratification received from using internet media can be divided into two different types- content gratification and process gratification. Content gratification is when a user gains information from the online media site and then uses it in their everyday life. Looking up the world news is an example of content gratification, due to the user's interest in the particular material they are reading. Process gratification is when the user gets gratification from the experience of using the media and the content that is realized during the process. Process gratification has nothing to do with the content within the media but solely the process in which the user receives it. Someone who uses the internet for process gratification would just search the internet looking for something to catch their interest. Process gratification is also more cultural and ritual based than content gratification, which is cognitive. The source of process gratification may have more of an affect on the two different cultures in question, Spanish and American. Of the activities that the internet is used for, such as entertainment, social interaction, and escape, social interaction was the one factor that seemed to indicate internet usage the most (Song, 2004). Escape, entertainment and relaxation seemed to also play a role, but did not have as large of a percentage in the usage.

In their study of communication students at Midwestern Universities, Song, Larose and Lin all connected the types of gratification and motivation of internet usage

and how it affects addiction (Song, 2004). In their study they found that there were several different types of gratifications that were positively related to addictive behaviors. Of these gratification factors, personal relationships maintenance, diversion from real life, and the feeling of virtual community were the most controlling over someone's addiction levels. This study also demonstrated that someone could live a normal life and could be deemed a "mild" internet addict. Mild addiction could be normal for a large part of the population. Mild addiction is when a person uses social media excessively, meaning multiple times a day, but there have yet to be negatives consequences in their life. The study also recognizes the shift for the Internet towards necessary uses, such as bill paying and online shopping. These activities have increase the amount of internet usage unrelated to social media. Along with gauging the gratification that drives social media and internet use, the study also found a negative correlation with "Aesthetic Experience", meaning the users become addicted unrelated to the looks or aesthetic factor of the website. Though this study was done solely on college students, it provides a good background for further research on other populations (Song, 2004).

Studies have been done to monitor individual's behaviors on these social media sites, and whether they are linked to addiction (Radha, et al. 2016). Radha, Yamini and Jayaparvathy studied the particular signs of addiction in relation to the specific app, WhatsApp. Their study suspected that ease of usage of the of the app and an increase in beneficial features led to an increase in the popularity of the application They used data mining to gather and analyze their data into two classifications, addicted users and non-addicted users. The data mining technique looked at factors such as duration of use and how often users replied to messages within the application. The cutoff for their definition

of “addiction” was to have continuous use for 5 or more hours in one day. The conclusion of this study was that most of WhatsApp users were addicted to the application. The idea that the increase in the use of the application was due to the ease of the use and the increase in features has been a main factor in the increase in the usage (Radha, et. al. 2016).

A special scale for social media addiction was created at the Bergen University in Norway. It measures a user’s relationship to and use of social media. The scale was originally designed solely for Facebook but was then adapted to other social media sites as well, including Twitter and Instagram (Andressean, 2017). The Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale uses the Likert scale of “Very Rarely” to “Very Often” for participants to create a final score of all their numbers added up. This scale was used in a study about the relationship between addiction to social media and video games with symptoms of psychiatric disorders. The prediction for this study was that young, single females would be the most addicted to social networking, while young and single males would be more likely to show addictive symptoms to video games. The genders show different patterns of addiction, women are more commonly addicted to texting, online shopping and social networking. Men are more likely to be addicted to online gaming, online gambling, and pornography (Kuss, et. al, 2011). People of all demographics have the propensity to be addicted to technology; however some factors have shown to increase a person’s likelihood of being addicted. These factors include being a younger age and being single (Kuss, et. al, 2011). Along with the relationship between addiction to social media causing symptoms of these disorders, studies in the past have led to the idea that psychiatric disorders can lead to the addiction of media. In this study, they define

addictive use as being “driven by an uncontrollable motivation to perform the behavior, and devoting so much time and effort to it that it impairs other important life areas” (Andresassen, et. al, 2016). This definition of addiction to social networking sites is similar to the previously mentioned study’s definition due to the fact that it specifies that the subject must have detrimental effects to their lives and have an uncontrollable desire to complete the act.

Social media addiction is hard to specifically define and even harder to pinpoint, but it is becoming a more common occurrence. This building problem will continue to affect our communication styles and our consumer behaviors. The true definition of social media addiction is when a person allows it to reach the point of affecting their lives. Social media currently is categorized under Internet Addiction. It can be affected by demographic factors, such as age and gender, and these also play a role in cultural basis behind the addiction. Forms of mild internet addiction can be more common as well, which can also have an effect on consumer behavior. These levels of addiction and factors towards propensity will be compared to the cultural data found as well.

HOW BUSINESSES USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO INFLUENCE CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

The invention of the internet eventually led to the development of social media but it also changed how consumers shop. The development of social media has created a drastic shift in power between businesses and consumers. The fact that social media is a form of multi-way communication, is fast and is affordable made it a prime outlet for businesses and marketers. Many businesses have now turned social media into a powerful marketing and public relations tool, collectively investing around \$4.3 billion into it. This is an intelligent move by these companies though, because more than 50% of social media users follow businesses and brands on social media (De Vries, 2012). This section highlights how prevalent social media is in businesses today, how it affects consumers, common mistakes businesses make in influencing consumers with social media, and how the use of social media can create value for the businesses. It will also discuss the comparison of American and Spanish businesses and their value creations on social media platforms.

Traditional media left all the power in the releasers of the information, like the newspapers and television channels. They could control what information was released and how it was released. Social media has changed this power focus, while celebrities and public figures receive the most attention, every person has the opportunity to spread information (Arnaboldi, 2016). The Internet was able to make this shift through many

different types of applications, including blogs, social networks, communities, forums and content aggregators (Gamboa, 2014). The ability for a regular person to say something that will go viral creates both positive and negative effects for businesses, depending on what is said. One customer that leaves a positive or negative review of a business can change its brand image or reputation very quickly and with a lot of consequences. Companies do not have the ability to control what is said about their services on social media, causing it to be a more trustworthy source of information to consumers and also a source of power for consumers (Arnaboldi, 2016). This source of authenticity also causes individuals to be more genuine and open when sharing their experiences and feelings, and creating a stronger sense of community and relation among other users, making their words more powerful. The stronger sense of community also creates new communities because through social media, people can find things that they can have in common. This benefits businesses by helping them create a stronger sense of community around their brand and their consumers can share their products to create new customers (Arnaboldi, 2016). Along with creating a sense of community around their brand, they also create a sense of community that encourages consumers to keep using social media. The feeling of community and connection is a reward basis for social media use and therefore it can also be a factor leading to addiction.

The negative to the stronger sense of community is the greater possibility to encouraging “mob mentality” through technology. One mistake made by a company or company representative can cause a public uproar with detrimental effects. As stated earlier, it is impossible to control the negative effect social media will have on a

company. An example of this is when DiGornio, the frozen pizza company, tweeted “#WhyIStayed You had pizza”. They sent out this tweet before fully researching the hashtag “#WhyIStayed”. The hashtag was being used to raise awareness for domestic violence and the reasons that women use to stay with their abusers. The catalyst for the hashtag was a video of Ray Rice abusing his wife that was released and within 24 hours there were 46,000 tweets using the hashtag. It took DiGornio four minutes to realize their mistake and issue a public apology but the damage was already done (Burt, 2015). These mistakes can be made off the company’s main social media sites, but anytime a representative of the company makes this type of mistake, it can also harm the company’s image as well. However, when a company responds to a consumer’s complaint or grievance properly, 18% of the unsatisfied customers become loyal to that brand and end up purchasing more (Gamboa, 2014). Many consumers have also taken to social media to defend public incidents like these. This can sometimes create more a discussion or a different perspective on the incident. With consumers having the ability to discuss and participate in both sides, it causes them to become more knowledgeable and opinionated.

Along with facing the possibility of mistakes on social media, companies can also mess up when they try to control social media or use it specifically for their agenda. Companies cannot try to control what is said about them on the internet, for risk of it backfiring and consumers labeling them as untrustworthy. An example of this is the trend towards “representative” sellers, in which individual’s attempt to sell products to their social media friends and followers. This creates feelings of distrust and annoyance in the social media consumers and can be bad for the brands (Arnaboldi, 2016). Another

example of a company attempting to control media for their own agenda is when companies pay users or offer incentives so they post positive reviews. Again this leads to consumers having feelings of distrust and dislike. The use of social media by companies has created a new sense of community and with it has changed the need of companies and consumers to develop trust and honesty. This shift has also caused it to be necessary for companies to shift their goals and strategies (Arnaboldi, 2016)

As claimed previously, social media has created a shift of power from the organizations to the consumers. Companies can now use social media to allow consumers to directly play a role in product development or marketing process (Nascimento, 2017). Companies now have stronger, cheaper and faster lines of communication with their consumers. The old communication style of television, radios and newspapers allowed companies to communicate with their consumers; the key now is that consumers can talk back to the companies (Mangold, 2009). They can capitalize on this by using it to ask for consumers opinions, to fix any product mistakes, or obtain ideas for new and improved products (Nascimento, 2017). However, there are no guarantees that the number of followers an organization has can correlate to the amount of views or reach they are getting. Up to 50% of profiles can be fake and be of no benefit to companies (Grizane, 2017). Companies find it difficult to calculate their Return on Investment with social media, as it is hard to pinpoint one specific measurable platform and media type that affects sales (Grizane, 2017). Online shopping is a relatively recent development to business models that also rely on social media. Males and females tend to online shop the

same amount, but Generation X and Y are more likely to shop online than Baby Boomers (Goyal, 2017).

A study done on five restaurants and their consumer's social media habits led to the a discovery of what percentage of those users were actually coming to the business due to social media. 93% of people in the town surveyed ate out at restaurants at least once a month and the 83% of people surveyed said they used social media at least once a day. The restaurants posted contests and vouchers on their social media sites to encourage users to visit. 56% of the consumers said that regular updates encouraged them to eat at the restaurant more often and 34% said they come to use the vouchers. Another 34% said that they were interested in obtaining vouchers to use (Grizane, 2017). The managers of the restaurants were interviewed and it was discovered that they lacked a focus on the potential of social media marketing. Still, It was concluded that Facebook was the most effective social media (Grizane, 2017).

The goal of proper social media marketing is the increase in brand popularity and likability, and this is directly correlated with the brand's social media pages' popularity. Social media has the same ability to persuade and inform as other media platforms but it creates new levels of connectivity between the consumers and the business. The goal of the companies is to understand what makes their social media marketing more popular and attractive to consumers. Fans that follow the brands' social media pages are more likely to go to the brick and mortar store, be brand loyal and tend to generate more positive word of mouth (de Vries, 2012). The factors that were determined to increase the numbers of likes on a brand post are not always identical to the factors that increase

comments. If a brand is attempting to increase their number of likes on a post, they should post something visibly pleasing, but not highly interactive. Posts that are highly interactive, such as questions or requests, can raise the number of comments on said post, but has a negative effect on the number of likes it receives. Visual pleasing photographs or contest posts are more likely to receive the most number of likes from the consumers. Positive comments from other consumers are also more likely to result in a higher number of likes on a post because it raises more positive awareness of the post (de Vries, 2012).

There is also evidence that negative comments on brands pages are not always bad. Strongly negative or positive comments, encourage discussion and subsequently more comments on said posts. If a post had neutral comments on it, it would not have had as many overall comments. The differing in opinions would generate discussions in the comment sections of the post, which in turn creates more thoughts about the brand. People who were brand fans would be more likely to feel closer to the brand because they spend time discussing it (de Vries, 2012). Companies purposefully try to design their social media posts to engage their fans and customers, because this can increase views and sharing among their target demographic (Swani, 2016). There are specific strategies that the marketers use to develop material to encourage sharing among their target markets and this also creates the word of mouth communication to help raise brand awareness. People are more likely to post when there is a psychological motive, these include “the need to share information and express self-identity, uniqueness, expertise, feelings, emotions, concern for others, and excitement” (Swani, 2016). Marketers have to

attempt to target those motives in order to recreate them for better interaction with consumers. Consumers that are classified as “social” are willing to participate and pay for products and media, making them highly targeted by companies and useful in social media marketing (Paniagua, 2014). However even though companies attempt to target these consumers, since social media is a new outlet for marketing, companies are still uncertain how much budget and work should be delegated to social media and often times the companies make erratic decisions. As discussed earlier, this can lead to major blunders by the company.

By using the psychological factors and attempting to create more active consumers on their social media sites, companies create benefits for themselves. A company creates value and above average returns in their industry by effectively using their resources and turning them into core competencies. Social media contains seven resources within its multiple different functions. These resources are: identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups (Paniagua, 2014). The resources are not mutually exclusive but also are not always present. These resources can affect businesses in four ways, through social capital, social marketing, social corporate networking, and customers’ revealed preferences. Each channel is affected by different social media resources and has effects on separate departments of the organization. Social capital affects corporate social performance, social marketing and customers’ revealed preferences affect the company’s financial performance, and social corporate networking affects operational performance (Paniagua, 2014).

Social capital consists of the identity and reputation segments of social media's resources and it shows the amount that social media affects the firm's relationships with society. An example of social capital would be if a firm has a wholesome reputation and therefore consumers see them as trustworthy. To gain this trust and social capital, companies must be transparent but they also must engage with their consumers. Corporate social capital has been linked directly to social media use for corporations (Brammer, 2006). This channel can be particularly hard to budget for and control because it is solely based on the consumer's perceptions of the company's social media pages and the company (Paniagua, 2014).

The consumer's revealed preferences, along with social marketing, are derived from the conversations, presence, and sharing resources from the social media. Revealed preferences as a capability shows what the consumers like, either about the brand or the products. Photos and posts with the most "Likes" or comments can demonstrate what is most popular, and recent social media updates, such as polling features on Instagram and Facebook, allow companies to specifically ask consumers about what they prefer. For example, clothing companies can ask their followers which print or design they want to appear more in their products. If a consumer votes in said poll, they are more likely to be aware of this company's product offerings, as well as more drawn to them since they got to vote to make it what they liked. The creation of these features also allows consumers to ask other consumers for their suggestions on products or services. This increase in connection and awareness that is aimed at creating more sales through consumer feedback on social media, has also had an effect in changing the dynamic between

consumers, businesses, and other consumers. The knowledge and insight gained from this can help positively affect a company's financial performance. The more consumer knowledge a company has about their consumer base, the better their financial performance will be (Paniagua, 2014). Social media knowledge has been used to future predict social and economic factors, such as unemployment rate, box-office revenue, car sales, and disease tracking, that can affect businesses successes or failures.

The social marketing segment of social media use is the logistic marketing actions, such as sharing and conversations can evolve into sales and financial returns for the firm. Since the early 2000s and the boom of social media, marketers have developed it as a part of their permanent marketing mix. The strategies used for social media marketing differ from those of traditional media outlets, such as TV and radio, due to its interactive features. Although social media has the same goals as all marketing efforts, to increase sales, it is hard for companies to pinpoint the return on investment from their social media marketing specifically. Social media still has the highest likelihood of sales creation than other media outlets (Paniagua, 2014).

Social corporate networking relates to internal networking and use of social media for the firm's employees. This channel of value is created by the resources of relationships and groups that branch from social media use and it has an effect on the company's operational performances. It is an informal way for the employees and managers of a firm to communicate, and can help them connect with potential hires or potential clients. In 2011, 57% of companies built networks through LinkedIn and that number has since grown (Neti, 2011). It is a cheap and easy outlet for this type of

communication, that can help a company run more efficiently, target its own assets more effectively and be more informed. This type of communication has also been studied to show an increase in relationship management and human resource capabilities (Paniagua, 2014).

A study was conducted on these channels of social media affect on consumer behavior and ultimately on company stock price as an indicator of business performance. The study concluded that social media does have an effect on business financial performance and stocks, especially user-generated content. User generated content is content created by the social media consumers and not by the company itself (Paniagua, 2014). The study also shows that the affects of social media on the company's performance is directly related to how much social media has penetrated the stock market. Social media has an effect on the stock price of companies, despite the Efficient Market Theory not including socialization into the model, the prices of the stock reflects the company information (Malkiel, 1973). However many other behavioral economists have theorized that the stock market is more related to human behavior and people's interpretation of the information, and this is where social media comes in to play (Lo, 1999). A reference given off by social media for a company can affect consumers interpretation of information and ultimately affect the company's stock price.

For consumer's social media provides efficiency to their consuming process. They are provided with more information, faster communication and increasing convenience to their ever busy lives. This spread of information and convenience has also forced companies to change their pricing strategy to be more competitive, usually

entailing pride reductions, and it has caused product diversity and a wider range of products to be available (Tiago, 2014). All of these factors are to a consumers benefit. A survey of marketing managers was conducted about what they believed to be the most beneficial element of social media for their firm and its marketing attempts. Eighty-seven percent of the managers surveyed responded that social media is most useful for the exchange of information, and this can apply to both internal and external arenas. Other responses were that it creates dialogue between the company and the consumer, and that it can help in evaluating the suppliers for the firm.

It was also found that the internet can help predict when consumers are going to have a negative reactions as well as predict future market forecasts (Tiago, 2014). Although the specific return on investment is hard to calculate for social media, 88% of companies were using social media as part of their marketing matrix in 2013, and that number has grown to 89.5% by 2016 (Social Marketing 2015: The Key to ROI Will Come from Within, 2014). 81% of respondents in the manager survey said that they were planning to increase the investments being made to social networking and 45% said they intended to invest in employees involved with digital marketing (Tiago, 2014). As of 2011 businesses allocated 6% of their marketing budget to social media marketing, and it was expected to grow to 18% through 2016 (Neti, 2011). The expectation of businesses to change a percentage of their marketing force to make social media a focus, shows how strong of a grasp it has on consumers and how businesses truly believe it can influence customers buying behaviors.

A study was conducted on the Spanish fashion retailer, Zara, on their social media outlets and the effect they had on Zara's consumer loyalty (Gamboa, 2014). Zara was started in 1970 in Galicia, Spain by Amancio Ortega. The company essentially created the industry of "fast fashion", a fashion segment focused on cheap, high fashion clothes. Their competitors were H&M, GAP and other companies of similar model. Today, Zara has 2,200 stores in over 93 countries, their sales are at \$17.2 billion and they are #51 on Forbes List of Most Valuable Brands (Zara on the Forbes World's Most Valuable Brands List, 2017). The company was able to achieve this type of domination through a unique business model of developing a product and having it in stores within two weeks, as well as their deep focus on market trends and fashion forecasts. Zara ranks as the fashion company with the most Facebook fans, as well as their fans being the most valuable. The value of a Facebook fan is calculated by finding the measurable differences in certain variable between a "fan" and a "non-fan". The variables used are product spending, loyalty, propensity to recommend, brand affinity, media value and acquisition cost. Each Zara Facebook fan is worth \$405.54 each (The Value of A Facebook Fan: An Empirical Review, 2013). To put this in reference, a Coke-Cola Facebook fan is worth \$70.16, showing that Zara was able to create a much higher base of Facebook loyal consumers than even the most popular American company. Studies also show that fans are 28% more likely to continue brand use and 41% more likely to recommend a product that they are a fan of to someone else (The Value of A Facebook Fan: An Empirical Review, 2013). These numbers show that social media does have an effect on consumer loyalty.

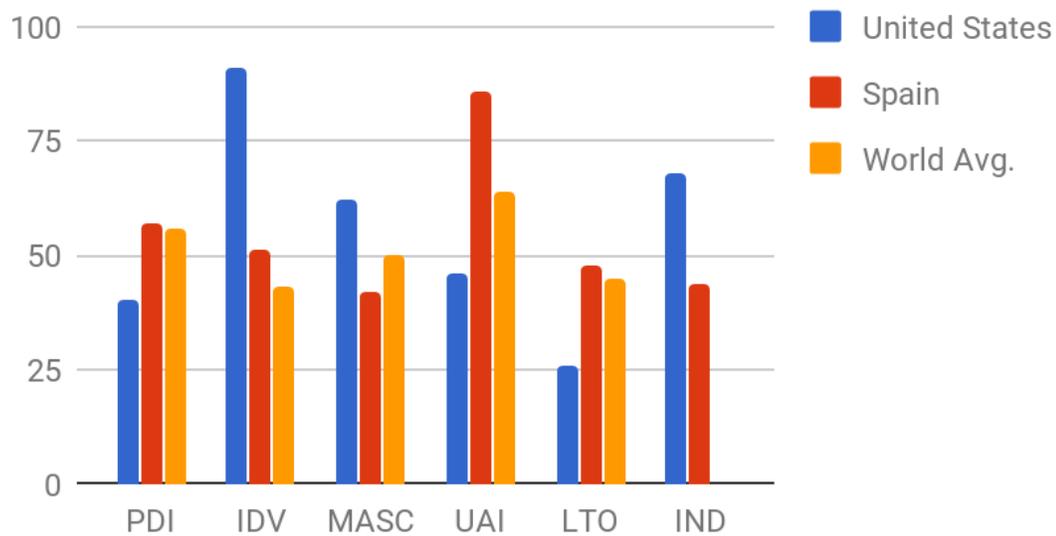
Studies have found that customer satisfaction with products, perceived value of what the consumer believes they are receiving and trust of the company are the biggest determinants of customer loyalty (Gamboa, 2014). The term “e-loyalty” was coined to describe loyalty derived online and it has been shown that this can begin the moment a consumer and a company start to develop an online relationship. As soon as a consumer begins to engage in social networks related to the brand, they create emotional connection with the brand. The study of Zara’s Facebook page and their consumers ended up showing what qualities affected consumer loyalty to their brand. One- fourth of Zara’s Facebook fans followed the page once a month, but three- fourths of the fans never engaged with the page. There was also no evidence that the fans bought any clothes due to their Facebook interactions (Gamboa, 2014). The study of Zara found that the fans’ of Zara’s determinants of loyalty were stronger than the non-fans. Customer satisfaction was Zara’s number one affector on fan loyalty. The study determined that Zara social media managers could improve in three different areas to increase their customer loyalty. They could post on the Facebook page more frequently, answer consumers criticisms and critiques more, and promote campaigns for the stores on Facebook. The study also highlighted that perceived value is more important in the real world than online, online Zara must work harder to prove real value through customer satisfaction and trust. As customer satisfaction is the number one driver of consumer loyalty, Facebook is a tool for creating more customer satisfaction. This study not only helps demonstrate how social media usage can change consumers behaviors, but it can highlight Spanish consumer usage compared to American. Zara is a Spanish based company and it is highlights Spanish business and consumer practices, in relation to social media.

Business usage of social media and consumer interaction with social media has had a forever changing impact on the marketplace. The constant use of social media by businesses and encouragement for increased communication is probably cause for people to use social media more than before, again potentially leading to increased rates of addiction. Social media integration by companies has had an effect on consumer behavior, which would presumably be exasperated by the addiction, or “mild” addiction to social media. The way businesses use the social media to reach their consumers and create the most significant effect on their consumers differs depending on the culture of the country.

CULTURAL COMPARISON: SPAIN AND AMERICA

To understand the basic differences between Spanish and American consumers, both of social media and of products, we must first compare the intrinsic differences in the two cultures. The cultural expectations, reactions, traditions and habits can affect their susceptibility for addiction and also their social media habits and expectations. The following section is an in-depth analysis of the Spanish and American cultures using Hofstede's dimensions. The first level of cultural analysis is the Hofstede's cultural dimension analysis. This analysis compares countries on six different factors. The factors are Power Distance, Individualism, Masculinity, Uncertainty Avoidance, Long Term Orientation, and Indulgence. The analysis rates the countries on a scale of 1-100, the higher the number the more the country's culture possesses those particular traits (Hofstede, 2011). These factors are what is considered normal within these particular societies and social control usually mediates everyone so they do not stray far from the norm. Below is a graph demonstrating the American scores, the Spanish scores and then the world averages for Hofstede's dimensions.

United States, Spain and World Avg.



Power distance in a culture refers to the difference between statuses of the people and how much an unequal power distribution is accepted by the people within the culture. If a culture is high in this driver, then it means there is a large inequality in power distribution and the members of the society expect it to be that way. The mean of all 56 countries scored by the power distance index was 56.91 (Richardson, 2007). Spain scored a 57 on the power distance dimension (“Country Comparison”). They have a relatively hierarchical society in which everyone everyone has their place. It is common for Spanish organizations to have one leader, who ideally has all the power and the subordinates follow what to do. Contrastingly, America scores a 40 on power distance. This is a fairly low score and can be attributed to America’s constitution and the phrase “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”. This statement intrinsically creates equal rights for all citizens, therefore diminishing the power distance and creating equal rights for all citizens. In a

study done comparing Japan and American use of media related to power distance, they found that someone who is lower on the power scale will use a less media rich outlet when dealing with someone of higher power (Richardson, 2007). The less a subordinate feels underpowered, the more free communication they can have. This relates to how Spaniards and Americans use social media, because the small power distance in the United States could create more free speech and usage on social media. Consumers may feel freer to communicate with companies and speak their minds.

The next factor the countries are compared on is individualism. On a societal level, this is the amount of interdependence there is between the members. A society that is individualistic is one where the citizens focuses on themselves and their families, whereas one that is not individualistic has a society that looks to always belong to groups and lean on one another. This type of society, that is opposite of individualistic, is called a collective society. An example of collectivist society is Korea, as they are a society that puts a lot of emphasis on extended families and a lot of their self-image comes from the groups that they identify with. They do not like anything that disrupts the harmony of a group, whereas other individualistic cultures can welcome the views of opposite sides to extend understanding. On the individualistic scale, Spain scored a 51 (“Country Comparison”). Compared to the other countries in Europe, this is a collective society but compared to other parts of the world, it would be considered individualistic. Because of this factor, Spaniards are considered laid back and they usually work in teams. America’s score for individualism is an astounding 91, making it one of the most individualistic societies in the world (“Country Comparison”). They are focused mostly around looking

after their close families and do not rely on help from the government as much. This also translates into American work culture, where the expectation is to be self-reliant and resourceful (Mooji, 2013). A more collectivistic society is found to be more reliant on social media, along with personal recommendations when it comes to consumer behaviors, because they will want to follow the trends. An individualistic society will be more inclined to post freely on social media, as well as explore their interests. Social media is such a large part of our lives that it is used to shape our consciousness, therefore continued excess use may lead to a more collective society (Berger, 2012).

The next factor the two countries were compared on is the Masculinity level within their cultures. A culture that is considered highly masculine is said to be highly motivated, driven and achievement oriented, while a culture that is more feminine is seen to be more of a caring society and that they focus more on individual's quality of life and happiness. The feminine culture is more nurturing and puts emphasis on having a good life as a signal of success. The key behind this culture variable is what is the motivation for citizens. Are they more motivated to be the best or are they more motivated to live the best life they can? A low score on this indicator means a country is more feminine while a higher score means it is more masculine. Spain scored a 42 on this culture indicator, which is a relatively feminine score, and it is demonstrated in the country's need for harmony ("Country Comparison"). Students in school are taught to not take strong stands on different sides, but rather work towards harmony. Spaniards look down on anyone who is being loud or boisterous in any situation, meaning they do not like when someone disrupts the harmony of the surroundings. America scored a 62 on the masculinity scale,

which is considered to be high (“Country Comparison”). High masculinity drive within a culture can also be linked the individualistic indicator. Americans tend to demonstrate their masculinity through individualistic drive, for instance they compete to be the best of the best in what they do at their jobs and use their successes to be an indicator of their status. This attitude also leads to Americans tending to believe that there is always a better way to do something, meaning they always strive to do better (“Country Comparison”).

The next Hofstede dimension is Uncertainty Avoidance, which is how the society handles the possibility of the unknown. There is no way to predict the future but some cultures attempt to control the future more than others, who just let it happen the way it is meant to. If a culture is high on uncertainty avoidance, then the members of the society feel threatened by an unknown situation and there are things embedded in the society to help alleviate these feelings. A country that is low on uncertainty avoidance is more likely to be entrepreneurial and the members will be more open to taking risks. This scale works backwards, as a high score means the country has a low uncertainty avoidance. Spain scored an 86 on the Uncertainty Avoidance dimension (“Country Comparison”). Spanish citizens have a strict rule set on how they are supposed to live their lives and any amount of changes causes them stress. They get extreme anxiety about unknown situations, therefore they are more likely to pick jobs that are set for life. Of all the Hofstede factors, this dimension is the most telling of Spanish culture. American scores very low on this dimension, with a 46 (“Country Comparison”). This means Americans are accepting of change, innovate with ideas, and open to try new things. Americans do

not require a lot of social rules but they do not express their emotions. This dimension shows the largest spread between the Spanish and American cultures. This dimension is set deep within our cultures, and it affects things like jobs choices and social choices. This dimension could have a strong effect on social media usage and business uses of social media because of how new social media is. Spaniards may be less likely to jump on social media or social media trends as the ever-changing Americans. The incidents of 9/11 created more fear in the American culture and has increased their social monitoring. Social media plays a large role in social monitoring, as it is used to gather data on populations and gauge mindsets. This one incident is something that could have hindered American openness for change and affected their free use of social media.

The Long Term Orientation dimension is a test of how a culture connects with their past, as well as dealing with the issues they have in current times. A society that gets a low score in this dimension is called a Normative Society. A Normative culture is more strict to their traditions and are less accepting of societal shifts. Cultures on opposite ends of the spectrum are more likely to push modern education to prepare for the future, and the focus on traditions is less prominent. The United States have an extremely low score in long term orientation, coming in at 26 (“Country Comparison”). Americans have strong views of what is wrong and right, especially when it comes to the principles that shape a society. This creates a strong divide between the two sides and makes a lot of topics controversial. America is known for its extremely divided and intense debates on issues such as abortion, gay marriage, and gun control. The epidemics of controversial topics is obvious in public relations scandals that have become more prevalent due to

social media, causing companies to need to be more aware of their social media presence and consumers attitudes. Spain scores a 48, which seems on the lower middle range, however they are defined as a normative culture (“Country Comparison”). The Spaniards relaxed lifestyle and lack of concern for the future has led them to receive this score on this dimension. The strict rules laid out by society, as discussed by the uncertainty avoidance, dictate how they live in the present, with a relaxed look toward the future.

The last Hofstede dimension is indulgence, which measures how much the members of a culture attempt to control their desires and compulsions. This dimension is not as widely used or accepted as the others. It is new and therefore not as researched, which is why there is no world average calculated yet. This dimension could be the most relevant in terms of social media, addiction, and consumer behavior. All three of these categories depend on someone’s ability to curb their desires. The indulgence versus restraint dimension is essentially affected by how the members of the society are raised. The norm for how to raise your child and how one should act is determined throughout the society. If a culture is weak on restraint, it is called an indulgent culture, whereas if it is strict, it is called a restrained culture. The three different aspects that go into the indulgence dimension are: happiness and pleasure in life, importance of leisure and friendship, and life control (Enkh-Amgalan, 2016). This dimension is the one of the most relevant to addiction and the use of social media because it determines the extent to which a societal member will attempt to control their impulses for use of addictive items. Spain scores relatively low on this dimension, with a score of 44 (Country Comparison”). This classifies them as a restrained society. They tend to be more pessimistic and do not

put an emphasis on satisfying desires. This type of gratification is seen as “wrong”. America comes in as an Indulgent society, with a score of 68 (“Country Comparison”). In this dimension, America is a relatively inconsistent culture. The members value hard work but also value the satisfaction of desires. In its core values, it has very pure ideals, however in reality there are many immoral people in prominence. This is also demonstrated by anytime the government attempts to control a substance within the culture. The prohibition created more alcohol related problems when it existed than there were when it didn’t exist and the recent war on drugs waged by the American government has been followed by an increase in drug usage. The fact that America has a stronger reward culture due to indulgence would be an indicator that they would be at higher risk for addiction.

Propositions

In total, Hofstede’s dimensions are key factors in describing important characteristics of society’s. The dimensions indicated some keys differences in the Spanish and American cultures that could have effects on social media usage, addiction and consumer behavior. The information gained from this cultural comparison led me to be able to make propositions about the cultures propensity to get addicted to social media and how that may affect their consumer behavior. The propositions are numbered and listed below.

1. Americans are more likely to be accepting of social media and its newfound influence in the business world because of their lower levels of uncertainty avoidance. The more acceptance and experimentation that one has with an activity

that is potentially addicting could in turn lead to more addictions. This would indicate that Americans are also more likely to be addicted to social media.

2. The way Uncertainty Avoidance characterizes the Spanish society the most, but the Independence dimension characterizes America the most, as America has one of the most Independent cultures in society. This dimension led to the idea that Americans would be more likely to use social media to find their own interests or needs, a potential difference in consumer behavior from Spaniards. Millennials can search social media for companies and products that they are drawn to the most, which helps them gain product knowledge differently. It is also probable that they will use social media to create a stronger feeling of independence, by designing their own social media sites to display exactly what they want it too. This self- esteem related issue has been known to be linked to excessive social media usage as well, meaning another potential increase for addiction.
3. Indulgence is a key dimension in this comparison. Indulgence links strongly to addiction because a culture that shames indulging in desires, would assumedly put more shame on addiction as well, since it is the lack of being able to control your desires. America scores higher than Spain in the Indulgence dimension, posing the idea that Americans are more likely to give in to their addictive tendencies and possible be more prone to addiction. This also relates to social media usage because excessive use of social media is a desire and therefore Americans will be more likely to over use social media. Social media use and viewing can leading to shopping habits, from influential marketers like bloggers, These purchases can

also be described as desires. Through this dimension, it would seem that Americans have the strongly likelihood to participate in all of these activities.

OBSERVATIONAL RESEARCH

To do the observational research for this paper, I lived in Barcelona for five weeks on a study abroad program. While I was there I observed the culture of the Spaniards and compared our culture. I particularly focused on their usage of social media and their consumer behaviors. To gather this data I went out to observe shoppers on three separate occasions, I attended a popular sporting event and monitored the customers in restaurants and on the streets to see social media usage.

Shopping Observation #1

The first time I observed shoppers in Barcelona, I was in a grocery store in the heart of Barcelona. The store was named Colmado Quilez. I was there for 20 minutes on June 26th, starting at 3:30PM and leaving at 3:50PM. During this observation, I did not notice much difference between the shoppers in this store and American shoppers. The grocery store was extremely small and while I was there, there were only 4 other shoppers, excluding my American roommates who were also with me. The other 4 shoppers did not spend a lot of time browsing. This may have been because it was their local store and they knew what they needed, or it may have been a cultural difference. An average American spends 41 minutes in the grocery store per visit (Goodman, 2008). This was certainly not the case with these Barcelonians, they seemed to get what they needed and leave. Shopper #1 was a younger women, potentially late twenties or early thirties. She got a loaf of bread from the bakery section of the store and then left

immediately. Shopper #2 was a middle-aged man. He bought food from the dairy section, then the fruit section and then left the store. Shoppers #3 and #4 were a couple. They bought a few items from the bakery area before leaving the store. None of the shoppers stayed in the store for longer than 10 minutes. The one thing I did learn about Barcelona shopping habits during this observation was that Spaniards must pay for the bags they use to carry their groceries. This is a stark difference from America where we try to make everything as customer friendly as possible. American grocery stores have coupons or discount signs everywhere. There was not a single coupon or discount sign in this grocery store. Often Americans can get things emailed to them or use coupons found on sites on their phones. Again, no one in the Spanish store was using such coupons.

Shopping Observation #2

The second trip in which I observed shopping was in a much more populated area. After my classes on July 3rd at 6:00PM I went to the shopping Plaza Catalunya, which is the direct center of the city of Barcelona. On this plaza there are shops like Sephora, Zara, Pull & Bear, Oyosho, H&M and Corte Ingles, a store that is very similar to an American department store. From my International Business professor I had learned that no stores in Spain ever have sales or markdowns. But during the months of January and July, every store in the country has giant sales, having things 50% or 70% off for example. Stores with business models like Zara, do not need to have sales because their items are already on the cheaper side, yet Zara has sales in Spain during these months because if it did not it would lose massive amounts of business to the stores that did. January and July are the months of the sales because the businesses use the sales to clear

out their entire inventory for that season in preparation for the new inventory. This intrigued me because a lot of American companies, particularly ones targeting younger audiences, use social media to give out special deals or to raise awareness of sales they may be having. They can also use social media as means of getting discounts that other consumers would not have access to.

While I was out on observing this shopping trip, there were too many consumers in the stores to even come close to counting. It was more similar to trying to Christmas shop at a mall the Saturday before Christmas. I later was told by my International Business professor that Spaniards are most likely to do their shopping right when they leave work, meaning around 6:00PM. I visited the stores Pull & Bear and Zara. Pull & Bear is a store targeted toward younger females, about ages 15-20, where Zara is targeting women a little bit older, generally ages 20-40. Since Pull & Bear's store is targeted towards younger women, who more commonly use social media, I looked around the store for signs of social media promotion. The tags on the clothing did not have any signs of social media but did have the company website. At the counter where you went to checkout, there were cards for promoting the company, again with the company website, but there was no mention of social media. I left Pull & Bear at 6:30 and then went to Zara. When I went into Zara, I found the same results. I then researched the number of followers popular "fast fashion" stores in Spain have and popular "fast fashion" stores in America. Below is a table depicting the number of followers for each on the social media sites:

	Instagram	Facebook	Twitter
Zara- Spain	25,000,000	26,000,000	1.3 Million
Pull & Bear- Spain	3,900,000	4,600	368,200
Old Navy- US	1,400,000	2,400	360,700
GAP- US	2,200,000	8,900,000	683,600

I did not notice the consumers in the store taking pictures with their phones. In American stores, particularly ones targeted toward young females, you will see the customers taking pictures of themselves, their friends or of the products. I finished and left the store at 6:45PM.

Shopping Observation #3

The third time I went to observe shoppers, I went into the Gothic Quarter of Barcelona. This part is close to the Plaza but has less tourist traffic. I went on July 21st at a more midday time. The stores that I went to here were small boutique shops. I went in the stores Florencia and The Room. Both of these stores were small. I went to Florencia at 1:20PM and left at 1:40PM. Like the other stores, I looked for signs of social media promotion or usage. I did not see any link or promotion for their social media. In these two stores, I did not see links to their websites either. Both stores do have websites though. In Florencia I saw two other shoppers. They were two mid-twenties females browsing the clothes together. They did not stay in the store longer than 15 minutes. I was at The Room from 2:00PM until 2:10PM. In The Room, there was no one else in the store other than myself.

Sporting Event Observation

I attended a charity soccer match at the famous home of FC Barcelona, Camp Nou. The match was on Friday, June 30th at 6:00 PM. It was a match of famous retired players and it was against a British team. The game was not close to being sold out, there were many open seats. Soccer is the most popular sport there, so it would be equivalent to football in America. One of the first things I noticed immediately was that the stadium had a name not related to a brand. In America it is very common for a stadium or arena to have the name of a company, such as Mercedes-Benz Stadium. Inside the stadium, there were advertisements but not as many ads as an American stadium. The scoreboard had four advertisements around it, all of the advertisements were for the sponsors of the team. There were two banner ads running around the entirety of the stadium, with sponsors ads scrolling through. However there were no games, contests, social media post requests, or halftime presentations by companies as there are in American stadiums. A typical NFL game in America lasts, three and a half hours. However the ball is only actually in play for the miniscule amount of eleven minutes. A lot of the time taken away from the game is for huddling, replays, etc. But the rest of the time is allotted for commercials, over 100 of them for people watching on TV (Seward, 2013) . If you are in the stadium, that one hour worth of commercial breaks, is used for company promotions and games. While Camp Nou did not have any of this, it did have free Wi-Fi, meaning that it is common for people to want to be using internet on their phones in the stadium. I left the stadium at about 8:00 PM. This experience also led me back to consider the difference between the two cultures and their acceptance of change. Spaniards were not calculated to be as

accepting of change, and this could be the reason why social media has not infiltrated all of their recreational activities like it has in the US.

Restaurant and Street Observations

Every morning as I walked to school and every evening coming home from school, I observed how the Spaniards walking used their cell phones. I walked to school at 8:45 AM and I returned from school at 6:00 PM. The use of cellphones was still there but was less than in America. The biggest difference I observed was that it was much less common for Spaniards to be texting or scrolling through their phone in the same way that is common for Americans. When they used their phones, they were either on the phone or they were listening to music. Americans are more known for texting and walking, there have even been talk of making it illegal to do while crossing a road since it has begun to cause accidents. The time when I took the Metro, when times and train lines varied, the train riders were not on their phones. The fact that Barcelona is one of the top pickpocketing cities in the world may play a role in this, since it is easy for a thief to snatch someone's phone if they are casually holding it. This happened to two American students that were studying abroad in my same group.

In the restaurants I ate in, I again looked for signs of social media usage, as it is common for Americans to be engaging in social media activities during their time in a restaurant. In one café, there was a man sitting outside at a table using his laptop. It was at 2:45 PM on Wednesday, July 12th. I looked closer at the laptop and the search engine was in English, so I believe this man was a tourist and not Spanish. The only other time I saw social media usage in relation to a restaurant was a big group of teenagers eating an

American burger joint in central Barcelona. They were speaking Spanish and appeared to be native. Of the 9 teenagers in the party, 4 of them were on their phone, specifically on Snapchat. It was at 8:30 PM on Saturday, July 15th. The observations I made about the Spanish and their phone usage compared to Americans made me begin to wonder if social media had permeated their society in the same way it had permeated America's.

Another cultural difference I noticed about the Spaniards is their propensity to stare. In the Spanish culture, it is not rude to stare at or watch someone while they are doing something. Americans consider it rude to stare at someone for too long. This reminded me of the phenomenon of "social media stalking" in millennials in America. This is when people use social media to "check out" someone that fascinates them or they admire. This phenomenon has had an affected in the development of "influencer marketing", where companies supply famous social media personnel with their products in hopes of boosting sales and awareness. I wondered if this was also a phenomenon in Spain, with their millennials and companies. Someone who wanted to delve deeper into the study of cultural differences in uses of social media may look into that.

Limitations

While I was in Spain, I attempted to conduct as much and as accurate research as I could. However, there were some limitations to the research I gathered. Barcelona was my city of study, and compared to the rest of Spain, it has a very different culture. Barcelona is part of Catalonia, a region of Spain that wants to break off into its own country. They speak a different language and have always been known as the city of rebellion throughout Spanish history. Another distinction that sets Barcelona apart from

the rest of Spain is the fact that it is an extremely modernized city. It is an international hub and therefore is more modern and culturally diverse than the rest of Spain. These differences could have led to observations that did not accurately represent the entire culture of Spain.

Another limitation that existed while I observed was that I always had to have a roommate with me. Especially considering the recent ISIS attacks and being in a foreign city as a young female with limited Spanish speaking skills, my roommates and I rarely went anywhere alone for safety reasons. This would lead to limitations on my observations because I always had another American with me and this could have potentially caused distractions, or caused me to miss some of what was going on.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this paper and this project, I collected a majority of secondary research as well as some primary observational research. The purpose of this paper was to delve into how addiction to social media affects consumer behaviors, and if cultural components had a factor in that. The Spanish and American cultures are both Westernized cultures, with democracies and relatively good business markets. The differences in these two cultures are not as considerable as the differences between some other cultures, however they still have different traditions and expectations of their members.

Addiction to social media is a growing factor, all over the world. Addiction to social media is definite when it starts to negatively affect one's life, however there are forms of mild addiction in which people can not go a certain amount of time without checking their social media. This new habit formation has changed the way businesses market and reach their consumers. It has also changed the way consumers receive, react, and connect to the businesses messages. In the cultural comparison, Spain was less likely to indulge in their desires, making excessive social media usage less common in their culture. They are also less driven by success than Americans, meaning companies push advertisements on consumers less in Spain. They are a more laid-back society and therefore the probability of social media addiction is not as big of a factor on their consumer behavior. The factor that is the key differences between the two societies is

Spain's uncertainty avoidance and how it controls their ability to accept new things into their society. Social media is a relatively new aspect of communication and therefore the Spanish have not adapted it as fast as the Americans have. Because there was not immediate acceptance of this new communication style, it has not become as custom for the Spaniards to use it in their constant advertising and marketing. Without the constant social media use for marketing and promotion, Spaniards are also exposed to it less, leading to a smaller effect on consumer behaviors and a lower likelihood for addiction.

If someone else wanted to conduct further research into this topic, I would recommend gathering primary research on social media use, especially by Millennials, in America. Further primary research on the American side of this study would help to increase the understanding of usage and dependence. It would also be recommended to do interview research of social media use in Spain, as sometime observational research does not get a full view of the picture. For example, if the Spaniards used social media all the time at home, that was not in my capability of observations. I believe that this study could be more solidified with data research to back the observations. It would be extremely beneficial for someone to look into real cases of social media addiction and attempt to find a correlation with online shopping or other consumer behaviors potentially affected by the addiction. These correlations could be compared between the different countries to delve deeper into what sort of basis the cultural aspects play in the situation.

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