

Perceptions of college students towards the use and usefulness of LinkedIn as a
professional networking tool

by

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Networking is a key component of a successful professional career. Studies have shown that between 60-75% of jobs are obtained through an individual's network. Today many professionals use the social media site such as LinkedIn to make and maintain professional connections. However college students only make up approximately 10% of LinkedIn's 300+ million users. There has been much research done regarding the use of social networking and academic and corporate use, little has been done to investigate how college students interact with LinkedIn. Therefore the purpose of this study was to gather students' perceptions of LinkedIn as a professional social networking tool.

Three research questions were used to find the use and perception of LinkedIn among college students and if there was a difference in the way that select students used it. A survey administered via Survey Monkey based on demographic, utilization, and perception of LinkedIn was sent to undergraduate students majoring in Kinesiology, Business Administration, and Mechanical Engineering during the spring 2015 semester. A total of 359 students responded to the survey, out of which only 105 owned LinkedIn accounts. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, frequencies, and

percentages, and the one-way analysis of variance test. The results showed that the use of LinkedIn was low, and 38% of account owners reported never using their account. Most of the participants who owned LinkedIn accounts were white males. Students shared a neutral perception about LinkedIn features and LinkedIn as a tool for professional networking. Mechanical Engineers had the largest population of users out of the 3 majors surveyed. The results showed that Business Administration students used LinkedIn more than the other two majors surveyed, and juniors and seniors used the site comparatively the same. In addition, the findings showed that there was no significant difference in the way Mechanical Engineers and Kinesiology majors used LinkedIn. The findings of this study will provide valuable information for students and career counselors on the features of LinkedIn and what guidance students need when using the site.

DEDICATION

I would first like to dedicate this body of work to God. Without his eternal wisdom and grace this would not be possible. Next I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my grandmother Gladys Ewing who always called me her “lil professor”, and my grandfather Walter Ewing. Thanks, to my mother Diann Ewing, my twin brother Jarvis Ewing, my aunts, uncles, cousins, nephew, and Men of Excellence brothers who have all been exceptionally loving, supportive, and understanding during this process, I dedicate this to you. To my best friends, Rashieka Sims-Coleman, Joey Alvarez, James Day and Gary Matthews thanks for believing in me and giving me encouraging words just when I needed them.

I would like to dedicate this research to all of my students at Mississippi State University and all other college students. Hopefully the findings will help you in your future careers. To my “kidz” at the Starkville Boys and Girls Club, this is dedicated to you. Let it serve as an example that you can achieve anything that you put your mind to with hard work and effort. To my Boys and Girls Club co-workers thanks for covering my room for me when I had to miss work for school related issues. Thanks for your support I hope that I can serve as an inspiration to you all and to you I dedicate this research.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As research reported that nearly 70% of all jobs are found via an individual's personal social network (Carey, Potts, Bryen, & Shankar, 2004), networking actually offers many benefits besides job opportunities, such as support, discovery, growth, resources, guidance, and status (Dulworth, 2008; Schawbel, 2010). Traditionally, networking has been a face-to-face activity that normally takes place at a conference or some type of meeting, where individuals can exchange contact and career information (Dulworth, 2008). One of the challenges when networking face-to-face is to figure out where to take the conversation after the initial introductions: "Hi, my name is..." and "What do you do?" (Baber & Waymon, 2002). However, with the vast growth of various social networks, this barrier has become less of a problem since professionals are making a shift towards online professional networking sites (Kryder, 2012). As a preferred networking tool, online professional networking sites offer individuals access to more in-depth and up-to-date information about their connects (Wasson-Blader, 2009), and also let networkers have more professional information readily available to them about their contacts. This makes the task of turning small talk into business a conversations become less of a challenge. As result of the growing popularity of professional social networking sites, networking has now become a two-prong endeavor, networking face-to-face and electronically via online social networks. Today professionals often find that using both

of these networking methods are critical when establishing and maintaining their professional network.

According to the US Census Bureau (2013) as of March 2011 for the first time in history, over 30% of the people in the United States 25 years old or older have a bachelor's degree. This number is up from 1998 when less than 25% of the people from the same demographic held a bachelor's degree ("*Bullet points: Educational attainment in the United States: 2011*," 2013). This is a clear indication that the job market is becoming more competitive among college graduates. Networking is one of the supplementary skills that students can acquire throughout their college career that has increased in its importance when searching for a job. Dan Schawbel (2012), founder of Millennial Branding and leading personal branding expert, stated that students are having a hard time finding jobs because while in college they did not begin to develop their careers. He also found in his research that only 29% of college student have had some type career guidance from the university's Career Center (Schawbel, 2012). According to Schawbel, students should practice participating in social media and networking with people who have achieved more success than themselves to improve professional networking skills (Hinds, 2008). Students who fail to network, especially via the social media site LinkedIn are missing out on valuable opportunities such as internships, jobs, connecting with alumni, and information about companies (Schawbel, 2012). Focusing on networking as a college freshman is very advantageous for college students since relationships are key to securing jobs (Hall, 2013).

Using Social Networking Sites for Recruitment

Technology is increasingly influencing our ways of life, and the way we network is no exception. The recruitment process for quality new hires in the professional job sector has become a very intensive process. Traditional recruitment methods used by employers consist of internal recruitment (employee referrals, rehires, internships, and internal job boards), external recruitment (job ads in print media and employment agencies), and walk-ins (Breaugh, 2008).

The internet has broadened the audience to whom employers can advertise job openings, doing so at a low cost. This has made the internet a valuable recruitment tool for employers; approximately 90% of large organizations use the internet for recruitment (Braddy, Meade, & Kroustalis, 2008). Both public and private sectors use their company websites to recruit more than any of their other human resource tools (Braddy et al., 2008). In order for a company's website to be a successful recruiting tool, it needs to be visible and reputable. Some key features that have been identified as vital parts to having a successful company website are colors, fonts, pictures, text layout, and information presented (Braddy, 2008). Companies' websites are not the only way the internet is being leveraged for recruitment.

Another internet tool that companies take advantage of is third party internet job boards, and these job boards can be general and specialized. Internet job boards are online tools that allow employers to post jobs openings, and allows job seekers to search and apply for jobs (Schawbel, 2010). General job boards such as Monster.com and Careerbuilder.com host posting for all types of jobs, and skillsets; specialized job boards such as BrazenCareerist.com and AcitiveRain.com post jobs for specific demographics

and skills (Schawbel, 2010). According to LinkedIn (2013a), this is also where most of the recruitment is done. LinkedIn, while not an internet job board, does have a job board section on the website. Understanding the applicants from these two types of job boards can be beneficial to organizations because it gives them a reference as to where to start looking for candidates with desired qualifications. Research has shown that specialized job boards produce applicants with a higher educational background and skill sets, while general job boards produce applicants with less education but more work experience (Breaugh, 2008). According to LinkedIn's (2013a) Global Recruiting Trends Research, social professional networks (SPN) ranked second as a source for finding quality hires with 37%, edged out by internet job boards with 38% (2013a).

Referrals are another form of passive recruitment that are just as popular online as they are face-to-face (Caers & Castelyns, 2010). This form of recruitment (word of mouth recommendations) is how most companies fill open job positions, giving some hint of truth to the adage: "It's not what you know it's who you know." (Bohlander & Snell, 2007). Caers and Castelyns (2010) indicated that through the employee's referral of potential applicants that organizations are able to cut expenses on recruitment and monitoring costs; they also made mention of the simplification of the information gathering process of prospective candidates. Bohlander and Snell (2007) stated that managers say that the quality of potential employees who are referred are typically high; this was due to the fact that current employees are reluctant to recommend people who are less than ideal for the job.

Using Social Media Sites for Screening

Although companies do use professional social networking sites for recruitment, (LinkedIn, 2013a), that is not the only reason why many employers use social networking sites. Employers use social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter to screen applicants too (Madera, 2012). Madera (2012) explained how this practice is becoming a growing concern with job seekers, because they feel sites like Facebook and Twitter are for personal use, and sites like LinkedIn are for professional purposes. Herbold and Douma (2013) conducted a study on students using social media to find a job, and found during their follow-up interviews that the most common comment from students would be: “Facebook is for fun, not for work!” (p. 71). Despite students’ perception of how Facebook should be used, employers are not likely to abandon the use of this newfound tool for screening applicants. Human resource managers have found social networking sites to be acceptable and increasingly important tool to use to avoid negligent hiring (Madera, 2012).

In addition, hiring managers are making the most of the ease and convenience of social networking sites. According to Madera (2012), 45% of hiring managers in the U.S. used social networking sites as a tool to screen individuals applying for jobs with them. With an additional 11% stating that they plan on using social networking sites for applicant screening in the future (Madera, 2012). Additional research has shown that 50% of hiring managers used the internet (i.e. Google, Bing) as a screening tool, by “searching” the applicants. As a result of this 20% of the search results have ended up disqualifying applicants (Madera, 2012).

Personal Branding and LinkedIn?

Having an online presence is important for professionals, specifically those looking for employment. When applying with potential employers, applicants should be aware that their online presence is increasingly being taken into consideration when making hiring decision ("Brand yourself on the web with ONS Social Media," 2012). The lack of a social presence can make employers question "what do you have to hide" ("Brand yourself on the web with ONS Social Media," 2012). Individuals should create a personal identity; this is also referred to as a personal branding.

Personal branding is building an individual's association in the minds of others (Gall, 2010). Tom Peters coined the phrase "personal branding" in an article that he wrote for a management magazine titled *Fast Company*, in 1997 as cited by Gall (2010). This concept has been around for a while now, but in the capacity of applying corporate branding to individuals and more recently to individuals specifically (Gall, 2010). Personal branding has shifted from businesses, to celebrities, to individuals, and it is making the way we market ourselves more of a conscious effort. Even industry leaders identify personal branding as a key factor for the job success of individuals. For instance, Kishu Gomes, a top oil industry executive, has stated that he believes personal branding to be the new holy grail of marketing (Wallis, 2007). A personal branding company, Image Factor, conducted a study that indicated 60% of on the job success was due exposure and visibility (Gall, 2010). Individuals should use precaution when developing their personal brand, and make sure that they are expressing what they stand for to everyone they meet in a compelling manner. Doing this will help them to create a definitive personal brand and strengthen the commodification of one's self (Bridgen,

2011; Wallis, 2007). There is one social networking site that can help professionals build their personal brand and professional networks. That is LinkedIn.

As the largest professional social networking site, LinkedIn launched on March 5, 2003 (Hearing & Ussery, 2012) and quickly had 4,500 members in their network by the end of the same month (LinkedIn, 2013b). LinkedIn has more than 277 million users and 84 million of which are from the U.S. (LinkedIn, 2013b). LinkedIn (2013b) reports that 30 million of their users are college students and recent graduates, and that they are the fastest growing demographic on the site. This highlights the importance of social networking among college students. LinkedIn's primary focus is to help connect professionals via an online environment, provide members the platform to advertise their skills, knowledge and experiences, and further plan future career steps (Caers & Castelyns, 2010). LinkedIn has several tools and features available to users for them to build their personal brand including: uploading a profile picture, uploading a profile banner, ability to upload samples of work, groups, list skills, post custom URLs, detail personal background, and custom headlines (LinkedIn, 2015).

Statement of the Problem

Despite the fact that professional networking is vital to a successful professional career, many college students fail to network with professionals. According to Owens and Young (2008), 60-75% of all jobs are never advertised, and are found in "hidden" job markets. Job search counselors and popular job search books recommend that job seekers use people in their personal social network as a starting point for looking for information about job openings (Van Hoyer, van Hooft, & Lievens, 2009). However, creating and maintaining personal social networks is a challenging job that many college students do

not do effectively. Although professional networking sites are used by hundreds of millions of professionals and future professionals, college students are a small percentage of those users. LinkedIn (2013b) has a college student user base of less than 10%. That is a small user base when compared to the 85.2% of college students who use some type of social media (Joosten, 2012), and the 96% of undergraduate students that use Facebook (Joosten, 2012). Schawbel (2008) thinks that college students are not using LinkedIn due to the fact that they do not have real work experience, feeling as though they too few contacts, and simply because they just aren't thinking about professional networking until after graduation (Hall, 2013). Lynne Sebille-White, senior assistant director of the University of Michigan's Career Center stated that students are intimidated by LinkedIn; the students think that having a "partial profile" could portray a negative impression about their skills and experiences to professional viewing their profile (Hall, 2013). She goes on to explain that students have little experience with professional networking and that they need coaching on how to do so effectively (Hall, 2013).

With the influx of social networking sites over the past ten years, many professional networking sites have also been taking advantage of this digital phenomenon. Now, LinkedIn has emerged as the premium professional social networking site and their user base is continuing to grow quickly. However, most of current research has focused on corporate uses and perceptions of LinkedIn, but very little research has been conducted studying how college students use this website as a tool for establishing and maintaining professional contacts. The lack of research on students' perceptions and use of professional social networks especially LinkedIn, is an issue because faculty and career advisors lack pertinent information that will allow them educate students on the

importance and proper use of the site. Therefore, this study is designed to investigate the use and perception of LinkedIn by students at Mississippi State University.

Purpose of Study

With the growing number of companies using social media to screen applicants, coupled with candidates social media content being the cause of their losing jobs, college students need to be knowledgeable of how to properly leverage social media. The purpose of this study is to determine the students' perceptions and use of the professional social networking site LinkedIn, and to examine whether there is any relationship among user demographics, utilization, and perceptions.

Significance of Study

The results from this study will provide a fundamental understanding of how students view and use LinkedIn. This study will also be useful in determining if features of LinkedIn are being maximized by students as they seek employment opportunities after graduating with a four year degree. The results from this study will also assist faculty and Career Center staff in educating students on how to effectively use LinkedIn as a professional social networking tool. In addition, the findings from this study will build upon the current limited research and literature on students' engagement with LinkedIn as a professional social networking tool.

Research Questions

1. How do students perceive LinkedIn as a tool for establishing and maintaining professional networks/connections?

2. How do students utilize LinkedIn as a tool for professional networking and personal brand?
3. Is there a statistically significant difference in perceptions by demographics (sex, age, race, classification, and major) of LinkedIn's function, content and interactions, and time?

Limitations of the Study

The limitations for this study are as follow:

1. The participants in this study consisted of Mississippi State University students that volunteered during the spring 2015 and are majoring in Business Administration, Mechanical Engineering, and Kinesiology; therefore, the findings from this study cannot be generalized beyond the population described.
2. The findings of this study was limited to the validity and reliability of the instrument used.
3. The findings of this study was limited to the honesty of the participants as well as the completeness of their responses to the survey.

Delimitations of the Study

The delimitations of this study are as follow:

1. This study was limited to examining only the perceptions and use of LinkedIn from Business Administration, Mechanical Engineering, and Kinesiology students at Mississippi State University.
2. The findings of this study were limited to students' engagement with LinkedIn, the number of those who have LinkedIn accounts, and their degree of engagement on the site.

3. The timeframe in which the data was collected during the spring 2015 semester.

Definition of Terms

Corporate Branding – are the efforts put forth by a company to build their association or the association with a product line in the minds of their customers and potential customers (Gall, 2010).

E-professionalism – the attitudes and behaviors of an individual that are the same as those of traditional professionalism environments found throughout digital media, some of these can occur in both public and private settings (Cain & Romanelli, 2009).

Facebook – the world’s largest social networking site, it provides a standard format for users to enter personal and contact information, upload pictures and video, update their status, add friends, create events, and comment on statuses, timelines/walls, pictures and videos (Smith & Kidder, 2010).

Internet Recruitment – a form of recruitment that uses an organization’s or a recruiting company’s websites to post information about job availability online (Bohlander & Snell, 2007).

LinkedIn – a professional social networking site that allows its users to create a profile, connect with peers and colleagues, and stay informed with news and professional insight on industry specific topics defined by the user (LinkedIn, 2015)

Personal Brand – is the accumulated total qualities of an individual has associated with them by others, both positive and negative. (Dulworth, 2008).

Professional Social Networking Site – a niche social network with a focus on networking for professional purposes.

Recruitment – a process that employers undertake in order to find and attract qualified applicants for job openings and encouraging them to apply (Bohlander & Snell, 2007; Braddy et al., 2008).

Social Capital – the preferential treatment between individuals or groups to a collection of resources that include information, trust, favors, etc., because of their membership or position with a certain social network (Villar & Albertin, 2010).

Social Networking Site – a general term used for a website that allows users to create a profile within a bounded system to connect with other users and view and navigate their connections as well as other connections within the site (Osborn & LoFrisco, 2012).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter provides an overview of existing literature and studies relevant to this study. However, due to the shortage of directly related literature to the research topic, the literature reviewed for this chapter will cover a range of topics relating to how students use social media, and how the use of social media affects students and their careers. The review of literature has been organized in the following sections: (a) History of Social Networking Sites, (b) Students and Social Networks: Perceptions and Uses, (c) Social Networks and Career Centers, (d) Social Capital, (e) Students, Social Networks, and Careers, (f) Effective Online Social Networking, (g) Personal Brand, (h) E-Professionalism, and (i) Corporate Use of Social Networks.

History of Social Networking Sites

“Social” is the mutual relations of human beings (McKean, 2007). “Network” is a group of people of exchange information, contacts, etc., for professional or social purposes (McKean, 2007). Combining these two and adding the internet can make the modern day phenomenon called “online social networks.” Social networking sites are defined as websites that allow their users to create interactive profiles to share, discuss and modify content uploaded by the users of the site (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011). Today social networking is the most popular activity online,

approximately 17% of all time online is spent on a social network (Oh, Ozkaya, & LaRose, 2014).

GeoCities was one of the first social networks and was founded in the early 1990's. It received mass appeal from the general public in 1995, and at its height it ranked in the top five most visited websites on the internet (Roberts, 2000). GeoCities focused on letting users share connect in virtual communities based off of "cities" that they chose relevant to the content that they shared. These cities were based off of actual real life cities such as Hollywood, Silicon Valley, and Tokyo among others (Roberts, 2000). Over the years, many other social networking sites began to sprout up. Some social networking sites are general, while others specialized in specific user needs. Sites like MySpace, Facebook, and LinkedIn all started around 2004, and are still dominant in their respective genre. MySpace specializes in social networking for bands and indie music. Facebook originally was exclusive to college students and is now open to anyone. Lastly, LinkedIn focuses on business professionals (Janusz, 2011). There are many social networks designed specifically for educational purposes most notably Edmodo (Krutka, Bergman, Flores, Mason, & Jack, 2014); however many faculty members in higher education are using sites like Facebook, LinkedIn , Twitter, and SlideShare as their preferred social networking sites for professional and educational purposes (Aragon, AlDoubi, Kaminski, Anderson, & Isaacs, 2014).

Students and Social Networks: Perceptions and Uses

When looking at the use of social networks in higher education, students are also using these sites for varied reasons (Aragon et al., 2014). Cheung, Chiu, and Lee (2011)

stated among all of the online social networking sites that Facebook is the most preferred by college students. From the various research conducted over the years, researchers have found that the Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter are the primary social networking sites that college students use (Herbold & Douma, 2013). Over the recent years, the use of social networking sites in colleges has grown rapidly (Aragon et al., 2014), and in a recent study, 96% of college students reported using Facebook (Joosten, 2012).

Research has shown that the main use of Facebook for college students is to communicate with family and friends that they see regularly and those that they rarely see, by using the integrated chat and messaging tools (Bicen & Cavus, 2011; Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009). Facebook provides students with details about what is going on in the lives of their family and friends (Palmer, Boniek, Turner, & Lovell, 2014). Not only do students use Facebook as tool for staying informed on people that they know, they also use it as a tool for checking out people that they have recently met in various social settings (Johnston, Chen, & Hauman, 2013).

Posting and sharing photos ranks second as a reason that they use Facebook, followed by games/entertainment, and finding out about or planning events (respectively; Bicen & Cavus, 2011; Pempek et al., 2009). Palmer, Boniek, Turner, and Lovell (2014) found that students who use social media spent more time viewing what others have posted on Facebook than they did posting themselves. Lin, Hoffman, and Borengasser (2013) found the same to be true with Twitter, students consumed information on Twitter but rarely replied to or retweeted tweets. When students do post the content of their posts is affected by their perceptions of their audience, and if they think that they do not have an audience they are less prone to use Facebook (Lin et al., 2013). The fact that

Facebook is where students connect with people whom they share a more personal connection with affect their content (McKinney, Kelly, & Duran, 2012). The perceived audience also plays another key factor in the use of Facebook for students in the fact that is determines what information and content the user post (Lin et al., 2013). Alongside the more casual uses of social networks, students also use them for academic and career purposes.

Colleges and universities have also noticed the usefulness of social networks as a tool to distribute information to students, both current and potential students (Malesky & Peters, 2012). As a result, more and more students use social network sites to access information such as application deadlines, financial aid availability, and processes (Wohn, Ellison, Khan, Fewins-Bliss, & Gray, 2013). Tess (2013) discussed how the classroom for a college student is varied, including the traditional face-to-face, online or a hybrid setting and how learning with social networks varies depending on the setting. Research has shown that most students feel that Facebook is a viable tool for learning, but after having taken a course that uses Facebook as a learning tool, only a half of them found it to be useful in their learning process (Tess, 2013).

Instructors use social networks for more practical purposes for their students, such as a means for students to complete assignments. It is without question that social media is more beneficial in some courses than it is in others. For instance students found that using Facebook to learn a English as foreign language (EFL) to be “useful” and “meaningful” (Aydin, 2014). Instructors have stated that EFL students reading and writing skills increased with the use of Facebook and that these students even experienced fun in the class (Aydin, 2014). Krutka, Bergman, Flores, Mason, and Jack

(2014) stated that the popular microblogging social network Twitter is an effective tool for collaborative reflection because of its 140 character limit. This limit inadvertently forces participants to post meaningful reflections (Krutka et al., 2014). Other research has identified that students can have a sense of community with a decline in the feeling of isolation in a course, and it increases content learning (Krutka et al., 2014). Additionally, students and teachers use Twitter as an informal mentoring tool. Risser (2013) conducted a study looking at informal mentoring networks that produced results indicating that students share (retweet) information shared with them by their mentor. Despite the various ways that both students and teachers use social networking sites, research has found that overall social networking sites are highly favored by both students and instructors for communicating and distributing materials (Tess, 2013).

Social Networks and Careers Centers

A meaningful and successful career is the goal of most college students. In order to successfully prepare themselves for this, students seek the professional help of the career center staff on their campus. Career centers around the U.S. have been increasingly using social networking sites to inform and educate students; however the number is still considerably low (Osborn & LoFrisco, 2012). Students have been identified using online resources to enhance career opportunities by visiting company and career center sites to inquire about job opportunities (Osborn & LoFrisco, 2012). Osborn and LoFrisco (2012) pointed out that social networking sites were not being utilized effectively by students when searching for employment.

The results from the research conducted by Osborn and LoFrisco (2012) revealed the main use of social networking sites by career centers is to provide information, such as job announcements, tips for searching for a job, career related sources, and promoting their (career center) services. The study also indicated that 78% of the career centers surveyed indicated that their posts or tweets about jobs were less than 25%; while 98% reported posting information about career center events. A large number of the career centers offer workshops on how to effectively use social networking sites when looking for employment; some even offer these workshops online (Osborn & LoFrisco, 2012). Other notable findings from the study show that students access the career centers on Facebook and Twitter more than they do on LinkedIn; more meaning those sites have more followers (Osborn & LoFrisco, 2012). Alumni were the exception, over 75% of LinkedIn followers were alumni. Eighty six percent of the career centers stated that they were either mostly satisfied or satisfied with their online social network offerings; while 13% stated that they were either unsatisfied or mostly unsatisfied with their online social networks. One of the noted downsides listed by several of the career centers is not having a clear vision of how they should use LinkedIn. One way for students to stand out when job searching is by building strong social capital within their professional networks. Many experts agree that it is important for students to build and maintain their social capital while in college (Cheung et al., 2011; Villar & Albertin, 2010).

Social Capital

Social capital is an individual's investment in social relations through the means of interactions and networking for access to resources such as information and favors

(Lin, 2001; Villar & Albertin, 2010). Research has shown social networking sites (Facebook) to be associated with social capital gains (Johnston et al., 2013). Villar and Albertin (2010) state that skills centered around developing social capital are important for students to have in order to succeed in their professional lives. There are four elements that allow social capital to work effectively: information, influence, social credentials, and reinforcement (Lin, Cook, & Burt, 2001). First, information is when individuals are privy to information concerning opportunities that would not be accessible to them otherwise. Influence is one's social ties, the ability to utilize influence with key decision makers in an organization (Lin et al., 2001). Third, social credentials are when an individual's social-ties acknowledge their relationship. This serves as a "certification" indicating that an individual can provide added resources beyond their personal capital that could potentially be beneficial to the organization. The final element, reinforcement, assures that an individual is a worthy individual as a member of a specific group (Lin et al., 2001).

The use of the internet for networking purposes has grown at a remarkable rate (Lin, 2001). Lin (2001) points out that cybernetworks (same as online social networks) offer social capital, and other information as well. These sites also advertise products and features that can be purchased, motivate users to be interactive with the site, and allow users to connect with others with little constraints concerning time and location (Lin, 2001).

Students, Social Networks, and Careers

As Herbold and Douma (2013) pointed out there has been very little research done to examine how students use social networking sites. Herbold and Douma (2013), found that only 19.3% of the students (users) surveyed claimed to have used social networking sites during their job searches; while the remaining participants (nonusers) stated that they never used social networks as a tool for looking for jobs. Further analysis of the research revealed that users and nonusers both would use social networking sites to ask friends and family who currently work for a prospective employer about a job first, followed by family and friends that work in the same industry (Herbold & Douma, 2013). Other noteworthy practices of the students' use of social networking sites during job searches are checking their profile by searching for themselves (Bing, Google, etc.), uploading their resume on a social networking site, and joining groups within social networks (Herbold & Douma, 2013).

Hall (2013) mentioned that Dan Schawbel, founder of Millennial Branding, conducted a follow-up interview with a student, Rachel Bradley-Haas, to get more details on her use of LinkedIn. Haas used LinkedIn profile to apply for jobs with a companies who required applicants to apply via their LinkedIn profiles (Hall, 2013). The student pointed out that unlike LinkedIn, Twitter was not helpful when it came to connecting to potential employers. She went on to elaborate that she used Facebook to get more information on companies after the initial search on LinkedIn (Hall, 2013)

Effective Online Social Networking

In order for students to network and create an effective online professional social network there are several fundamental practices they must adhere to. The use of networks, a strong network, taking care of their network, defining their personal brand and e-professionalism are all key practices for developing an effective online professional social network (Dulworth, 2008; Kryder, 2012). The proper use of online professional social networking sites can enhance the success of one's professional career by the means of career guidance, door opening, learning, and expertise.

Students must invest the needed time to develop strong professional networks. The qualities of a strong network are relationships, diversity, quality, and quantity (Dulworth, 2008). Strong social networks are built on relationships, this goes beyond accumulating business cards and e-mail addresses. Dulworth (2008) along with Sacks and Graves (2012) all agree that people are more willing to do things for individuals whom they have a close and strong relationship with. Sacks and Graves (2012) refer to this as social distance. Diversity in a social network allows students to learn new things, introduces them to new opportunities, and even move their career in a new direction. The quality and quantity of a professional network are interchangeably considered the most important qualities of a professional network. Sacks and Graves (2012) point out that most students believe that the larger their network, the larger their possible opportunities and benefits are. However Sacks and Graves (2012) believe in quality over quantity, comparing social networking sites to Facebook stating the more friends a person has the less s/he knows about them. The same is true with professional networks, and in turn results in low quality professional contacts and relationships (Sacks & Graves, 2012).

From his research, Dulworth (2008) found that everyone who participated viewed larger networks as better networks because it increases the chances of opportunities. Quality was said to possibly be more important than quantity. The quality of a student's social network should be "rich in experience." Quality connections are individuals who are experienced, have strong networks themselves, have authority, can create opportunities, and can command respect in their respective field (Dulworth, 2008).

The next key practice is taking care of a network. There are four things that must be done in order to properly take care of a professional network including: building relationships, giving, recruiting new people, and being sensitive (Dulworth, 2008). Building relationships requires students to stay in touch with their connections; this is not a surface-level activity like sending brief e-mails or updating contact information. Dulworth (2008) stated that the key to successful networking is to focus on what you can give someone. Students should be prepared to give back or give first when networking. While networking students should be aware of how they are interacting with others; they should not seem self-centered or always ask for favors when networking. Dulworth (2008) notes that another thing that students need to be aware of is making sure that the flow of information is going in both ways; they shouldn't just drill others for information without sharing information about themselves, this creates a balanced relationship. (Dulworth, 2008). After a given time, students should recruit new people into their network in order to keep themselves interesting and for them to continue to grow and develop. The best way to do this is to ask people in one's network to introduce them to new people (Dulworth, 2008; Kowalsky, 2012). Lastly, when taking care of a network make sure that sensitivity of the time of others is considered. Students should not waste

the time of their professional connections with casual conversations, instead the meetings should be around twenty to thirty minutes and be meaningful (Dulworth, 2008).

Personal Brand

The last key element to an effective professional network is for students to develop their personal brand. Schawbel (2012) stated that most students (93%) are unaware of what is, and that many are missing out on easy branding opportunities such as creating and actively using LinkedIn profiles, distributing business cards, creating personal domain names for social media sites, and professional blogs. Personal brand is essentially how others see an individual and partly how they view themselves, in short it is someone's professional reputation (Dulworth, 2008; Poepelman & Blacksmith, 2014). Poepelman and Blacksmith (2014) point out that an individual needs to be fully aware of who they are in order to create a strong personal brand, and that an individual's personal brand should be founded based on their values, personality, beliefs, and personal interests. Janssen (2009) points out that first impressions are important, and that individuals should frequently search themselves on the internet to maintain their personal brand (Cleary, Ferguson, Jackson, & Watson, 2013; Janssen, 2009).

Personal brand is measured by brand strength and brand quality. These two dimensions are measured as vague/ill-defined or sharp/vivid and positive or negative respectively (Dulworth, 2008). Brand strength is what comes to peoples' mind when they think about a particular individual. The more qualities they associate with the person and their areas of interest, the more vivid the brand strength. If very little comes to mind, then the brand strength is vague. The qualities associated with an individual, create their brand

quality. It is important to remember that strong brand quality can be associated with positive or negative qualities (Dulworth, 2008). Dulworth (2008) listed identifying your mission, proving your credibility, identifying who you are by telling stories, reciprocating, and giving back as ways to strengthen brand positive quality.

Poeppelman and Blacksmith (2014) look specifically at developing a personal brand online, and how to use specific online features to help create a personal brand. Two of the most commonly used sites for this particular purpose are LinkedIn and Twitter. LinkedIn profiles are designed in a format that enables an individual to highlight their professional skills and experiences; this serves as a comprehensive branding resource (Poeppelman & Blacksmith, 2014). Poeppelman and Blacksmith (2014) recommend users of LinkedIn use these key features to develop their personal brand: posting status updates, liking other's updates, updating your profile regularly keeping others informed on your current activities, and identifying what you like and who you like. Caers and Castelyns (2010) found in their study that 78.7% of their participants believed that LinkedIn could help promote themselves when they posted information about their training and professional experiences. Following thought leaders and companies in a field of interest is a way to stay "ultraconnected." Doing this will help influence recommendation from LinkedIn on who you should connect with as well as promoting your name to others in that area of interest (Poeppelman & Blacksmith, 2014). The most essential thing that an individual should do to develop their personal brand on LinkedIn is to upload examples of their work, such as documents, presentations, and publications that they have done in their area of interest (Poeppelman & Blacksmith, 2014).

Twitter allows for personal brands to be developed by letting its users tweet (post) brief messages on things that interest them. Tweets can be read by other users and easily found by others by using hashtags and retweeting, these methods also allow for a tweet to be spread quickly across Twitter (Poepelman & Blacksmith, 2014). Twitter allows users to follow trends, or hashtags that are commonly used. It is important that users use identifiable hashtags in order for their tweets to be found. Twitter, like LinkedIn uses an artificial intelligence (AI) system that looks at the users followed and from that makes suggestions for new people to follow (Poepelman & Blacksmith, 2014). Finally when tweeting it is important to remember to communicate in a professional manner.

E-Professionalism

Professional behavior online is referred to as e-professionalism and is a new issue that leaves many professionals asking the question: “What is acceptable online behavior on social networking sites?” With the rapid growth of social networking sites, and many professional activities taking place online, it is important to identify how to properly conduct one’s self professionally in an online setting. E-professionalism is a broader concept of netiquette, which is professional communication via electronic communication methods such as e-mail, discussion board, and professional social networks (Cain & Romanelli, 2009). Social networks often make it difficult to tell where personal ends and professional begins (Aase, 2010). This topic is important due to the fact that society is shifting to a paradigm where being in public or private is not determined by an individual’s physical location (Cain & Romanelli, 2009).

The American College of Surgeons (ACS) advocates of professionalism believe strongly that professionalism goes beyond the professional setting of the operating room and hospitals, they also believe that it carries over into community settings as well (Go, Klaassen, & Chamberlain, 2012). Practicing e-professionalism in many cases is not much different than being professional in person. Ways to conduct one's self in an e-professional manner include: being aware of copyright, trade slander, and libel laws, staying within area of expertise, managing personal and professional social networks via appropriate channels (Cleary et al., 2013), making profiles private, never assuming that a private profile is unaccessible to others, avoiding posting unprofessional pictures, and not voicing opinions about your school, employer, or colleagues (Jannsen, 2009). Ultimately, it is important to remember attitudes, behaviors, and opinions posted online are considered public. The user should be aware that these things will be viewed differently by society and have the potential to be damaging to their professional career (Cain & Romanelli, 2009).

Corporate Use of Social Networks

In order for students to fully know how to effectively leverage social media, it is important that they understand how employers are using it. Companies are using social networking sites in varied ways, including marketing their products and services, customer service, distribution of information, recruitment, and screening (Caers & Castelyns, 2010; Johnson, 2011). As for college students seeking a job with an employer after completion of their degree, they should familiarize themselves with the way social networks are being used to recruit and screen applicants. Recruiting through social networks is a growing trend; prominent organizations such as the CIA and Ernst &

Young, who focus on recruiting college aged recruits are using social networking sites to recruit (Smith & Kidder, 2010). Companies use both LinkedIn and Facebook when recruiting students, however LinkedIn is used more than Facebook during this process (Caers & Castelyns, 2010). Caers and Castelyns (2010) conducted a study that indicated that only 18% of the participants use Facebook for recruiting purposes. From their study (Caers & Castelyns, 2010) they found that companies agree that neither LinkedIn nor Facebook is useful for internal recruitment. Companies can also pay a small fee to post job openings on LinkedIn. Additionally, some companies go as far as to pay bonuses to employees who post available positions on their Facebook page, on the condition that the referral is hired (Smith & Kidder, 2010).

Although students may view the use of Facebook for fun, things get serious when companies start use Facebook as a screening tool for applicants. Applicants are becoming increasingly equally qualified, this has led companies to use various means, including social networking sites, to determine who will be the best fit for their organization (Smith & Kidder, 2010). The content that students post on social networking sites can be detrimental to their potential career. A study conducted by Careerbuilder.com found that 35% of employers rejected applicants because of the content that applicants had posted on the profiles of their social networks (Madera, 2012). Companies have listed things such as extensive romantic exploits, interest in violence, and possession of alcohol exhibited on an applicant's profile as factors that results in them removing an applicant from consideration (Smith & Kidder, 2010). Only 18% of the participants stated that they hired applicants because of content posted on their social networks (Madera, 2012). Users

should adjust their privacy setting on social networking sites to only allow minimal information about themselves available to individuals who are not in their network. Even with high security settings employers still can access an applicant's account through various means such as: sending the applicant a friend request, comparing an applicant's network of friends to see if they have mutual friends, or use current employees to access the applicant's page (Smith & Kidder, 2010).

Social network profiles gives employers more detailed information about an applicant. In today's corporate setting, companies are pursuing applicants with many different interests. It is important that college students in the United States understand that a job is more of a privilege than it is a right (Smith & Kidder, 2010). Employers still have the right to employ individuals who best represent their business. Their expectations for personal conduct in public is different from the younger generation that they are typically hiring. Social networks can often lead to employers making biased decisions about applicants (Caers & Castelyns, 2010); therefore, students should use caution when posting to their social networks and build profiles of an ideal employee until the general divide of the appropriate use of social networks diminishes (Smith & Kidder, 2010).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology and research procedures that have been used to collect the data for this study. The purpose of this research is to determine the students' perceptions and use of the professional social networking site LinkedIn, and to examine whether there is any relationship among the user demographic, utilization, and their perceptions of LinkedIn. This chapter is divided into the following sections: research questions, research design, participants, instrumentation, procedures, and data analysis.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide the study:

1. How do students perceive LinkedIn as a tool for establishing and maintaining professional networks/connections?
2. How do students utilize LinkedIn as a tool for professional networking and personal brand?
3. Is there a statistically significant difference in perceptions by demographics (sex, age, race, classification, and major) of LinkedIn's function, content and interactions, and time?

Research Design

This study mainly utilized two research designs. Descriptive research design was used to answer Research Questions 1 and 2. Descriptive research is described as a research method used to gather data in order to test a hypothesis or to answer questions pertaining to the opinions or perceptions of individuals on a given subject (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009). Descriptive research is also ideal when collecting information dealing with beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and the makeup of a group (Gay, et al., 2009). Therefore, descriptive research methods was best used in this study for students' perceptions of using LinkedIn as a professional networking tool.

As a means of answering Research Question 3, a casual comparative research design was used. Casual comparative designs attempt to determine the cause of consequences of differences between existing groups (Gay et al., 2009). However, according to Gay et al. (2009), because of the inability to manipulate the independent variable, causal comparative designs are not robust enough to truly investigate cause and effect relationships. Consequently, because of the inability to manipulate the independent variables in this study (student's major, sex, and race), causal comparative research was deemed most appropriate to answer Research Question 3.

Participants

The population for this study consisted of undergraduate students at Mississippi State University majoring in Business Administration, Mechanical Engineering, and Kinesiology. These three majors were selected because of the diverseness of the fields of study, and because they represented the majors with the largest enrollment in their

respective college. The colleges were picked because of their high enrollment numbers and the variedness between the fields of study.

With a total university enrollment of 19,635 during the spring 2015 semester, the population selected for this study represents over 14% of the total student population (2,441). According to university spring 2015 enrollment records, there were 538 (22%) Business Administration students, 700 (29%) Mechanical Engineering students, and 1,203 (49%) Kinesiology students. The demographic information for the overall sample (333 participants) of the three majors for race, age, and sex is outlined in Table 1. A minimum sample size of 333 students from the three majors surveyed will be needed for this study for a confidence level of 95% for this study.

Table 1

Demographic Information by Major

Race	Business Admin	Mechanical Engineering	Kinesiology
Indian/Alaskan Native	0%	1%	1%
Asian	1%	0%	2%
Black	18%	31%	9%
Hispanic	3%	1%	3%
International	6%	1%	4%
Multiracial	2%	1%	1%
Native Hawaiian/P.I.	0%	0%	0%
Unknown	0%	1%	1%
White	70%	64%	79%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Age	Business Admin	Mechanical Engineering	Kinesiology
18-21	54%	64%	63%
22-25	21%	28%	32%
26-29	10%	6%	3%
30+	15%	2%	1%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Sex	Business Admin	Mechanical Engineering	Kinesiology
Male	61%	91%	51%
Female	39%	9%	49%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Instrumentation

The instrument *College Students' Perceptions of LinkedIn* used for this research was a modified version of the *Perceptions of Using Facebook for Instruction* survey

developed by Dr. Chien Yu. The survey instrument (Appendix B) included the following three sections and was administered online:

1. Section A: Demographic
2. Section B: Utilization
3. Section C: Perception

Section A: Demographic, consisted of 10 items that gathered participants' demographic information, such as their sex, age, classification, major, degree, and employment status.

Section B: Utilization, consisted of 12 items that were designed to collect measures of students' utilization of LinkedIn. The item choices for this section included 1 ranking item, 3 Likert Scale item, and 8 closed-ended items.

Section C: Perception, consisted of 19 Likert Scale items designed to collect measures of students' perception of LinkedIn. The item choices for this section included a 5 point Likert Scale with a range from: 1 – strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neutral, 4 – agree, 5 – strongly agree to answer the 19 items.

Instrument Reliability

To determine reliability the researcher used the test-retest reliability method. The test-retest reliability option is defined as giving one group of participants a test but at two different times, to test the consistency of the scores over time (Gay et al., 2009).

Cronbach's alpha was used to establish internal consistency for items with more than two scores. The Cronbach's Alpha for the pilot survey was .745 and the Cronbach's Alpha for the final survey was .560. George and Mallery ("*Archived: In SPSS, how do i compute*

Cronbach's alpha statistic to test reliability?," 2015) interpreted the reliability of Cronbach Alpha results as such: $>.9$ Excellent, $>.9$ good, $>.7$ acceptable, $>.6$ questionable, $>.5$ poor, and $<.5$ unacceptable. Based on this scale the final instrument is a poor value for internal consistency.

Instrument Validity

The content validity of the instrument was established prior to use. First, four respected professors in the College of Education critiqued the instrument for clarity and meaningfulness. Second, a pilot study using the instrument was conducted with a group of six students from the university. The completed surveys from the pilot study were reviewed by the researcher and feedback provided by the participants of the pilot study were used for necessary revisions and improvements.

Procedures

Prior to data collection and a pilot study, the IRB at Mississippi State University was contacted to request approval to carry out this research study. After IRB approval, the researcher contacted the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness to obtain the email addresses for the population of this study.

A pilot study was conducted upon approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Mississippi State University. A pilot study is a small-scale version of the study (usually consisting of three or four participants) that is conducted before the full-scale is administered (Gay et al., 2009). The purpose of a pilot study is to identify problems or issues that are initially unforeseen by researchers. Pilot testing the instrument can also

provide the opportunity to identify deficiencies in the instrument and to make necessary improvements (Gay et al., 2009).

The pilot study for this study was conducted during the spring semester of 2015. The participants for the pilot study were chosen by a volunteer sampling method. The researcher obtained volunteers from the TKT 1273 Computer Applications course. A total of 6 students were needed for the pilot study. Gay, et al. (2009) stated that participants in the pilot study should be similar to participants in the full-study. Therefore, the students who participated in the pilot study were also undergraduate students at Mississippi State in various colleges. There was a critique section at end of the survey asking participants if there were any problems with the survey. If so they were given the opportunity to leave comments addressing any issues or concerns in a text field. The pilot study was administered via the online survey tool Survey Monkey. Participants had one week to complete both the test-retest survey. Improvements from the pilot study included grammatical changes and questions logic changes with the survey progression.

Following the pilot study and any necessary instrument revisions, an email was sent to the entire participant list requesting their participation in the study. Care was given to ensure that the instructions and instrument aligned with each other, to produce valid test results. The study was administered to students majoring in Business Administration, Mechanical Engineering, and Kinesiology. The students' email addresses were provided by the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness. An informed consent was included in the online survey, and participants could choose from either "agree" to the guidelines to take part in the survey or "disagree" option to not participate in the survey. In order to increase participation rate, the researcher included a drawing for

participants to win one of three \$50 Visa gift cards. Participants were given the option entering their Net ID in a text field at the end of the survey in order to be entered into the drawing.

Data were collected during the spring 2015 via an online survey tool, Survey Monkey. Participants were given a 30 day window to complete the survey. After the first 15 days of availability, the researcher sent out a first reminder email asking all students who have not completed the survey to do so within the next 15 days. One week before the survey closes the researchers sent out a final reminder asking for those have not taken the survey to please do so before the final week. After the deadline to complete the survey has elapsed, the researcher exported the data from Survey Money into IBM's Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using SPSS version 21 for Windows. The researcher used descriptive statistical analysis, frequencies, and percentages, to answer Research Questions 1 and 2 on how students perceived and utilized LinkedIn. The one-way and two-way analysis of variance tests (ANOVA) were used to answer Research Question 3 whether there was a statistically significant difference in perception by students' demographics. The ANOVA is a type of inferential statistic that is used to test whether or not there is a significant difference between the means of two or more groups (Gay et al., 2009).

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the finding of the study that investigated the use and perceptions of college students' perceptions and use of LinkedIn as a professional networking tool.

Demographics

There were a total of 2,441 students majoring in Mechanical Engineering, Business Administration, and Kinesiology that were asked to take part in this survey. A total of 359 took the survey with a total of 105 having a LinkedIn account. Generalization should not be made beyond the sample of this study.

Sex

Out of the 359 respondents, 354 answered the demographic question concerning sex, 168 were female (47.5%) and 186 were male (52.5%). Among the respondents, 105 students had LinkedIn accounts: 38 female (36.2%) and 67 males (63.8%). Table 2 represents the overall frequency and percentage of all student participants by sex. The frequency and percentage of students with LinkedIn accounts by sex are represented in Table 3.

Table 2

Frequency of Sex (Overall)

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	186	52.5%
Female	168	47.5%
Total	354	100%

Table 3

Frequency of Sex (With LinkedIn Accounts)

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Female	38	36.2%
Male	67	63.8%
Total	105	100%

Race

Three hundred and fifty-five participants responded to the race demographic survey item. The following races were represented in the study: Asian, 5 (1%); Black, 68 (19%); Hispanic, 9 (3%); International, 1 (0%); Multiracial, 11 (3%); and White, 261 (74%). Only 103 participants with LinkedIn accounts answered this question and the results were as follow: Asian, 1 (1%); Black, 15 (14.6%); Hispanic, 1 (1%); Multiracial, 5 (4.9%); and White, 81 (78.5%). Table 4 represents the frequency and percentage of all student participants by race. Table 5 represents the frequency and percentage of students with a LinkedIn account by race.

Table 4

Frequency of Race (Overall)

Race	Frequency	Percentage
Asian	5	1%
Black	68	19%
Hispanic	9	3%
International	1	0%
Multicultural	11	3%
White	261	74%
Total	355	100%

Table 5

Frequency of Race (With LinkedIn Accounts)

Race	Frequency	Percentage
Asian	1	1%
Black	15	14.6%
Hispanic	1	1%
Multicultural	5	4.9%
White	81	78.5%
Total	103	100%

Age

The ages gathered for this study were broken down into four groups: 18-21, 22-25, 26-29, and 30+. Overall 355 students responded to the age demographic item, and 104 respondents with LinkedIn accounts responded to this item. The majority of the overall participants were in the age group 18-21 (69%). Table 6 presents the frequency and percentage of all student participants by age groups. The frequency and percentage of students with LinkedIn accounts by age groups are represented in Table 7.

Table 6

Distribution of Age Groups (Overall)

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18-21	246	69%
22-25	99	28%
26-29	8	2%
30+	2	1%
Total	355	100%

Table 7

Distribution of Age Groups (With LinkedIn Accounts)

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18-21	60	57.7%
22-25	38	36.5%
26-29	5	4.8%
30+	1	1%
Total	104	100%

Classification

The classification for the participants in this study were freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior. Overall 353 students responded to this item, and 104 of those respondents had LinkedIn accounts. Out of the 353 student participants, 58 were freshmen (16%), 79 were sophomores (22%), 105 were juniors (30%), and 111 were seniors (32%). The 104 students with LinkedIn accounts had a classification breakdown of 13 freshmen (12.5%), 13 sophomores (12.5%), 29 juniors (27.9%), and 49 seniors (47.1%). Table 8 represents the frequency and percentage of the all student participants

by classification. Table 9 represents the frequency and percentage of students with LinkedIn accounts by classification.

Table 8

Frequency of Classification (Overall)

Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Freshman	58	16%
Sophomore	79	22%
Junior	105	30%
Senior	111	32%
Total	353	100%

Table 9

Frequency of Classification (With LinkedIn Accounts)

Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Freshman	13	12.5%
Sophomore	13	12.5%
Junior	29	27.9%
Senior	49	47.1%
Total	104	100%

Graduation Date

The participants in this study chose a graduation date ranging from fall 2014 to summer 2019 or later. Among 349 participants that responded to this item, 102 respondents had LinkedIn accounts. Sixty-two students (18%) graduating in spring 2017 were the largest group. The largest graduating semester for students with LinkedIn accounts was spring 2015, with 28 participants (27.5%). Table 10 represents the

frequency and percentage of all student participants by graduation term. The frequency and percentage of students with LinkedIn accounts by graduation term are represented in Table 11.

Table 10

Frequency by Graduation Term (Overall)

Graduation Term	Frequency Overall	Percentage
Fall 2014	1	0%
Spring 2015	51	15%
Summer 2015	9	2.5%
Fall 2015	16	5%
Spring 2016	57	16%
Summer 2016	11	3%
Fall 2016	44	13%
Spring 2017	62	18%
Summer 2017	2	0.5%
Fall 2017	18	5%
Spring 2018	54	16%
Summer 2018	5	1%
Fall 2018	10	3%
Spring 2019	8	2%
Summer 2019 or later	1	0%
Total	349	100%

Table 11

Frequency by Graduation Term (With LinkedIn Accounts)

Graduation Term	Frequency	Percentage
Fall 2014	1	1%
Spring 2015	28	27.5%
Summer 2015	2	2%
Fall 2015	7	6.8%
Spring 2016	10	9.7%
Summer 2016	5	4.9%
Fall 2016	12	11.7%
Spring 2017	17	16.7%
Summer 2017	1	1%
Fall 2017	2	2%
Spring 2018	12	11.7%
Summer 2018	2	2%
Fall 2018	2	2%
Spring 2019	1	1%
Summer 2019 or later	0	0%
Total	102	100%

Major

Overall 345 participants responded to the major demographic item, with 104 having LinkedIn accounts. The majors of the participants of this study consisted of 74 (22%) Business Administration, 132 (38%) Mechanical Engineers, and 139 (40%) Kinesiology. The breakdown of majors with participants with LinkedIn accounts was 22 (21.2%) Business Administration, 55 (52.9%) Mechanical Engineers, and 27 (26%) Kinesiology. Table 12 represents the overall frequency and percentage of student participants by major. Table 13 represents the frequency and percentage of student participants with LinkedIn accounts by major.

Table 12

Frequency by Major (Overall)

Major	Frequency	Percentage
Business Administration	74	22%
Mechanical Engineering	132	38%
Kinesiology	139	40%
Total	345	100%

Table 13

Frequency by Major (With LinkedIn Accounts)

Major	Frequency	Percentage
Business Administration	22	21.2%
Mechanical Engineering	55	52.9%
Kinesiology	27	26%
Total	104	100%

Employment

Overall 356 participants responded to the employment demographic item, with 105 having a LinkedIn account. For the employment status, 165 (46%) participants of the 356 indicated that they were employed, and 191 (54%) of the participants were not employed. Of the 105 (53.3%) participants with a LinkedIn account, 56 were employed. The remaining 49 (46.7%) participants were not employed at the time the survey was administered. Table 14 represents the frequency and percentage of employment status for

the two groups. Table 15 represents the frequency and percentage of students with LinkedIn accounts by employment status.

Table 14

Frequency by Employment Status (Overall)

Employment Status	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	165	46%
No	191	54%
Total	356	100%

Table 15

Frequency by Employment Status (With LinkedIn Accounts)

Employment Status	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	56	53.3%
No	49	46.7%
Total	105	100%

LinkedIn Account

Only 355 participants responded to the account ownership demographic item. For LinkedIn account ownership, 121 (34%) participants had a LinkedIn account; 102 (29%) participants did not have an account but would create one soon; 132 (37%) participants did not have a LinkedIn account and did not want one. Among 105 participants who responded to the account type demographic item, the free account was used by the vast majority of participants with 101 (96%) participants using this type of account; 1 (1%) participant used the Business account; 1 (1%) participant used the Business Plus, and 2

(2%) participants used the Personal Plus account. Table 16 represents the frequency and percentage of all student participants by account ownership. Table 17 represents the frequency and percentage of LinkedIn accounts by account type.

Table 16

Frequency by LinkedIn Account Ownership (Overall)

Account Ownership	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	121	34%
No, but I will create one soon	102	29%
No, I do not want a LinkedIn account	132	37%
Total	355	100%

Table 17

Frequency by LinkedIn Account Type

Type of LinkedIn Account	Frequency	Percentage
Free	101	96%
Business	1	1%
Business Plus	1	1%
Personal Plus	2	2%
Total	105	100%

As shown in Table 16, among the 355 students who responded, a total of 234 (66%) students reported they did not have a LinkedIn account, and students that had a LinkedIn account numbered 121 (34%). Of the 121 students who had a LinkedIn account, only 103 answered the survey asking the type of account they had. The overwhelming

majority, 99 (96%) had free accounts and only 4 (4%) had premium accounts. Table 18 represents the frequency and percentage of student participants with premium accounts.

Table 18

Frequency of Free Account Users Who Have Had Premium Accounts

Demographic Variables With LinkedIn Account	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	4	4%
No	99	96%
Total	103	100%

Account Ownership Length

One hundred and four participants with LinkedIn accounts responded to this survey item. The account ownership timeframe that had the most students was 1-2 years (32%). Most of those students were juniors and seniors, with a vast majority of 78 (75%) students in two classifications. Table 19 represents the crosstabulation of LinkedIn account ownership timeframe by classification. Juniors (45%) had a larger percentage of its users to have their LinkedIn Accounts for 1 year or more.

If grouped by major, Business Administration students owned accounts longer than any of the other majors surveyed, with 46% of their users having owned their LinkedIn accounts from one year or more. Out of the majors with LinkedIn accounts, 44 (42%) of the 104 participants had their LinkedIn account for one year or longer. Table 20 represents the crosstabulation of LinkedIn account ownership timeframe by major.

Table 19

Frequency of LinkedIn Account Ownership Length by Classification

Classification	1-3 Months	4-6 Months	7-9 Months	10-12 Months	1-2 Years	2+ Years	Total
Freshman	7 (53%)	1 (8%)	0 (0%)	3 (23%)	1 (8%)	1(8%)	13 (100%)
Sophomore	2 (15%)	7 (54%)	1 (8%)	0 (0%)	3 (23%)	0 (0%)	13 (100%)
Junior	5 (17%)	5 (17%)	2 (7%)	2 (7%)	12 (41%)	3 (11%)	29 (100%)
Senior	6 (12%)	9 (19%)	5 (10%)	6 (12%)	17 (35%)	6 (12%)	49 (100%)
Total	20 (19%)	22 (21%)	8 (8%)	11 (11%)	33 (32%)	10 (9%)	104 (100%)

Table 20

Frequency of LinkedIn Account Ownership Length by Major

Major	1-3 Months	4-6 Months	7-9 Months	10-12 Months	1-2 Years	2+ Years	Total
Business Administration	4 (18%)	5 (23%)	2 (9%)	1 (4%)	7 (32%)	3 (14%)	22 (100%)
Mechanical Engineering	10 (18%)	12 (22%)	5 (9%)	5 (9%)	16 (29%)	7 (13%)	55 (100%)
Kinesiology	5 (18.5%)	5 (18.5%)	1 (3.5%)	5 (18.5%)	11 (41%)	0 (0%)	27 (100%)
Total	19 (18%)	22 (21%)	8 (8%)	11 (11%)	34 (33%)	10 (9%)	104 (100%)

General Use

One hundred and four participants responded to this survey item. Most students who used Linked did so on a monthly (37%) bases. Among the 104 participants that responded, 14 out of 26 freshmen and sophomores reported never using their LinkedIn account; in contrast 26 of the 78 juniors and seniors reported never using the site. Overall, a total of 40 (38%) of the 104 classified students with LinkedIn account reported never using their LinkedIn account. Seniors used the site more than the other 3 classifications, with 59% of seniors with LinkedIn accounts using the site weekly or

monthly. Table 21 represents the crosstabulation of the general use of LinkedIn by classification.

If grouped by major, Business Administration majors used the site more in general than the other majors with only 23% of the participants with LinkedIn accounts stating that they never used the site, compared to the 40% of Mechanical Engineers and the 44% of Kinesiology students reporting to have never used the site. Business Administration majors had 64% of their participants to use the site on a weekly or monthly basis. Table 22 represents the crosstabulation of general use of LinkedIn by major.

Table 21

Frequency of Students General Use of LinkedIn by Classification

Classification	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Yearly	Never	Total
Freshman	0 (0%)	2 (15%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	9 (69%)	13 (100%)
Sophomore	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	5 (38%)	1 (8%)	5 (38%)	13 (100%)
Junior	0 (0%)	4 (14%)	12 (41%)	3 (10%)	10 (35%)	29 (100%)
Senior	1 (2%)	9 (18%)	20 (41%)	3 (6%)	16 (33%)	49 (100%)
Total	2 (2%)	16 (15%)	38 (37%)	8 (8%)	40 (38%)	104 (100%)

Table 22

Frequency of Students General Use of LinkedIn by Major

Major	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Yearly	Never	Total
Business Administration	2 (9%)	2 (9%)	12 (55%)	1 (4%)	5 (23%)	22 (100%)
Mechanical Engineering	0 (0%)	10 (18%)	18 (33%)	5 (9%)	22 (40%)	55 (100%)
Kinesiology	0 (0%)	4 (15%)	9 (33%)	2 (8%)	12 (44%)	27 (100%)
Total	2 (2%)	16 (15%)	39 (37.5%)	8 (8%)	39 (37.5%)	104 (100%)

Network Size

One hundred and four participants responded to this survey item. Over half (52%) of the students in four classifications had a network size of 0-10. Only one student reported to have a network size of 51 or greater that was not a junior or senior. Freshmen used LinkedIn less than the other three classifications, with 77% of freshmen having a network size between 0-10. Table 23 represents the students' LinkedIn network size by classification.

If grouped by major, Business Administration students tended to have the largest LinkedIn networks. Of Business Administration students, 23% have a network size between 26-50 people. Mechanical Engineers represented 61% of the majors in the network sizes 26-50, and 55% of the three majors in the network size 51-100, and were the only major to have a LinkedIn network size of 101-200. Table 24 represents the crosstabulation of students' LinkedIn network size by major.

Table 23

Frequency of Students' LinkedIn Network Size by Classification

Classification	0-10	11-25	26-50	51-100	101-200	Total
Freshman	10 (77%)	2 (15%)	0 (0%)	1 (8%)	0 (0%)	13 (100%)
Sophomore	8 (62%)	5 (38%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	13 (100%)
Junior	16 (55%)	6 (21%)	5 (17%)	1 (3.5%)	1 (3.5%)	29 (100%)
Senior	20 (41%)	8 (16%)	12 (25%)	7 (14%)	2 (4%)	49 (100%)
Total	54 (52%)	21 (20%)	17 (16%)	9 (9%)	3 (3%)	104 (100%)

Table 24

Frequency of Students' LinkedIn Network Size by Major

Major	0-10	11-25	26-50	51-100	101-200	Total
Business Administration	9 (41%)	7 (32%)	5 (23%)	1 (4%)	0(0%)	22 (100%)
Mechanical Engineering	28 (51%)	8 (15%)	11 (20%)	5 (9%)	3 (5%)	55 (100%)
Kinesiology	16 (60%)	6 (22%)	2 (7%)	3 (11%)	0 (0%)	27 (100%)
Total	53 (51%)	21 (20%)	18 (17%)	9 (9%)	3 (3%)	104 (100%)

Account Update Frequency

There were 104 participants who responded to this survey item. None of the students surveyed used LinkedIn on a daily bases to update their profile. Monthly, 37% was the frequency in which respondents updated their LinkedIn account. Freshmen had the highest percentage of students who never updated their LinkedIn profiles with 69%. Juniors updated their profiles most frequently; 45% of them updated their account on a monthly basis. Table 25 represents the crosstabulation of how often students update their

LinkedIn profile by classification. Monthly profile updates were the most frequent between the three majors.

If grouped by major, Business Administration majors had a higher percentage of users to update their LinkedIn profile monthly with 46% doing so. Table 26 represents the crosstabulation of how often students update their LinkedIn profile by major.

Table 25

Frequency of How Often Students' LinkedIn Profile are Updated by Classification

Classification	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Yearly	Never	Total
Freshman	0 (0%)	1 (8%)	2 (15%)	1 (8%)	9 (69%)	13 (100%)
Sophomore	0 (0%)	1 (8%)	4 (31%)	2 (15%)	6 (46%)	13 (100%)
Junior	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	13 (45%)	6 (21%)	10 (34%)	29 (100%)
Senior	0 (0%)	2 (4%)	19 (38%)	14 (29%)	14 (29%)	49 (100%)
Total	0 (0%)	4 (4%)	38 (37%)	23 (22%)	39 (37%)	104 (100%)

Table 26

Frequency of How Often Students LinkedIn Profile are Updated by Major

Major	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Yearly	Never	Total
Business Administration	0 (0%)	2 (9%)	10 (46%)	4 (18%)	6 (27%)	22 (100%)
Mechanical Engineering	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	18 (33%)	17 (31%)	19 (34%)	55 (100%)
Kinesiology	0 (0%)	1 (4%)	10 (37%)	3 (11%)	13 (48%)	27 (100%)
Total	0 (0%)	4 (4%)	38 (37%)	24 (23%)	38 (36%)	104 (100%)

Job Search

There were 100 participants who responded to this survey item. Seniors used the LinkedIn to search for jobs more than any of the other classifications. A majority of 61% of the various classifications reported not having used LinkedIn to search to jobs.

Freshmen had the highest percentage (46%) of its users to use LinkedIn to search for a job. Table 27 represents the crosstabulation of students' use of LinkedIn to search for a job by classification.

If grouped by major, Business Administration majors used LinkedIn more than any other majors surveyed. They had 45% of their participants to report using LinkedIn to search for a job. Table 28 represents the crosstabulation of students' use of LinkedIn to search for jobs by major.

Table 27

Frequency of Have Students Used LinkedIn to Search for a Job by Classification

Classification	Yes	No	Total
Freshman	6 (46%)	7 (54%)	13 (100%)
Sophomore	4 (33%)	8 (67%)	12 (100%)
Junior	12 (43%)	16 (57%)	28 (100%)
Senior	17 (36%)	30 (64%)	47 (100%)
Total	39 (39%)	61 (61%)	100 (100%)

Table 28

Frequency of Have Students Used LinkedIn to Search for a Job by Major

Major	Yes	No	Total
Business Administration	10 (45%)	12 (55%)	22 (100%)
Mechanical Engineering	20 (38%)	33 (62%)	53 (100%)
Kinesiology	9 (36%)	16 (64%)	25 (100%)
Total	39 (39%)	61 (61%)	100 (100%)

Frequency of Job Search

There were 103 participants who responded to this survey item. The most used frequency that students used LinkedIn to search for jobs was yearly, 20 (19%) students indicated that that they used the site on a yearly bases to search for jobs. Juniors had a higher percentage of any other classification to use LinkedIn on a monthly or yearly bases, with 18% using it monthly and 25% using it yearly. Table 29 represents the crosstabulation of how often students us LinkedIn to search for jobs by classification.

If grouped by major, Business Administration majors were the only major to use LinkedIn to search for a job on a daily bases; Mechanical Engineers were the only major to use LinkedIn to search for a job on a weekly bases. Monthly Kinesiology majors used LinkedIn to search for a job more than the other majors, with 22% of Kinesiology majors searching for jobs on LinkedIn monthly. Table 30 represents the crosstabulation of how often students us LinkedIn to search for jobs by major.

Table 29

Frequency of How Often Students Use LinkedIn to Search for Jobs by Classification

Classification	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Yearly	Never	Total
Freshman	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (15%)	2 (15%)	9 (70%)	13 (100%)
Sophomore	1 (8%)	0 (0%)	1 (8%)	3 (23%)	8 (61%)	13 (100%)
Junior	0 (0%)	1 (4%)	5 (18%)	7 (25%)	15 (53%)	28 (100%)
Senior	1 (2%)	2 (4%)	6 (13%)	8 (16%)	32 (65%)	49 (100%)
Total	2 (2%)	3 (3%)	14 (14%)	20 (19%)	64 (62%)	103 (100%)

Table 30

Frequency of How Often Students Use LinkedIn to Search for Jobs by Major

Major	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Yearly	Never	Total
Business Administration	2 (9%)	0 (0%)	2 (9%)	5 (23%)	13 (59%)	22 (100%)
Mechanical Engineering	0 (0%)	3 (6%)	6 (11%)	10 (19%)	35 (64%)	54 (100%)
Kinesiology	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (22%)	5 (19%)	16 (59%)	27 (100%)
Total	2 (2%)	3 (3%)	14 (14%)	20 (19%)	64 (62%)	103 (100%)

Job Offer

There were 103 participants who responded to this survey item. Out of the four classifications, only 8 students were offered a job via LinkedIn, with seniors consisting of 63% of those offered a job. Table 31 represents the crosstabulation of students offered a job via LinkedIn by classification.

If grouped by major, Business Administration majors had higher percentage of job offers with 14% of their participants receiving job offer via LinkedIn. Table 32 represents the crosstabulation of students offered a job via LinkedIn by major.

Table 31

Frequency of Have Students Been offered a Job Via LinkedIn by Classification

Classification	Yes	No	Total
Freshman	1 (8%)	12 (92%)	13 (100%)
Sophomore	0	13 (100%)	13 (100%)
Junior	2 (7%)	26 (93%)	28 (100%)
Senior	5 (10%)	44 (90%)	49 (100%)
Total	8 (8%)	95 (92%)	103 (100%)

Table 32

Frequency of Have Students Been Offered a Job Via LinkedIn by Major

Major	Yes	No	Total
Business Administration	3 (14%)	19 (86%)	22 (100%)
Mechanical Engineering	4 (7%)	51 (93%)	55 (100%)
Kinesiology	1 (4%)	25 (96%)	26 (100%)
Total	8 (8%)	95 (92%)	103 (100%)

The summary for the demographic section of survey indicated that most of the students that used LinkedIn were male and whiter. In addition, most students to use LinkedIn were no older than 21 and majoring in Mechanical Engineering. Most students did not have LinkedIn accounts, and more than 1/3 of the students who participated indicated that they did not want a LinkedIn account. The students who had LinkedIn accounts typically hadn't had them for long; 58% had their account 1 year or less. Network size reflected minimal use as well with 52% of the students having only 0-10 people in their professional network on LinkedIn. There was a total of 39 (39%) of

students who have used LinkedIn to look for a job, but only 8 (8%) have been offered a job via the site. Of the students who owned LinkedIn accounts, 53% were employed. Overall juniors and seniors were even in the use LinkedIn; both using the site more than any other classifications. Business Administration majors generally used LinkedIn more than the other majors surveyed.

Data Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question #1

How do students perceive LinkedIn as a tool for establishing and maintaining professional networks/connections?

To answer the first research question, the researcher used various descriptive statistics to determine how students perceived LinkedIn as a professional networking tool. Section 3 of the questionnaire (Appendix B) collects students' perceptions of LinkedIn in three distinct areas: *Functions, Content and Interactions*, and *Time*. The following 8 survey items from Section 3: 1a, 1c, 1d, 2c-2e, 2i, and 3a were used to measure students' perceptions of LinkedIn for establishing and maintaining new connections. Participants' perceptions were captured by them indicating the degree to which they believed that LinkedIn was useful, by indicating their responses on a Likert Scale questions. Table 33 displays the means range of the students' response to the Likert scale items dealing with perception of LinkedIn as a tool for establishing and maintaining professional connections, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Table 33

Perceptions' Likert Scale Means Range

Perception	Range
Strongly Disagree	0 – 1.49
Disagree	1.5 – 2.49
Neutral	2.5 – 3.49
Agree	3.5 – 4.49
Strongly Agree	4.5 - 5

Functions Table 34 displays students with LinkedIn accounts perceptions of LinkedIn functions usefulness in establishing and maintaining professional connections, 102 students responded to this item. The highest mean score was 3.93 (agree) for students' perceptions of LinkedIn being convenient for professional networking. The lowest mean score was 3.13 (neutral) for students' perceptions on LinkedIn as a viable alternative to traditional face-to-face networking.

Table 34

Crosstabs of LinkedIn's Functions Utilization Perception

Question	N	Functions					Mean
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
I think that LinkedIn...							
Is convenient for professional networking	102	3 (2.9%)	3 (2.9%)	18 (17.6%)	52 (51%)	26 (25.5%)	3.93 (100%)
Is a viable alternative to traditional face-to-face networking	102	11 (10.8%)	19 (18.6%)	31 (30.4%)	28 (27.5%)	13 (12.7%)	3.13 (100%)
Helps to grow a sense of community and strengthens bonds between connections	102	6 (5.9%)	12 (11.8%)	38 (37.3%)	32 (31.4%)	14 (13.7%)	3.35 (100%)

Content & Interactions Table 35 displays the students' perception of LinkedIn's content and interactions usefulness in establishing and maintaining professional connections. The mean score was 3.24 (neutral) for LinkedIn's ability to influence users to actively engage in strengthening relationships with their connections. Students had a neutral perception on LinkedIn's ability to keep them up-to-date with their connections professional lives with a mean score of 3.36 (neutral). The mean score was 3.52 (agree) for LinkedIn's ability to recommend relevant connections to the participants' field of study; 3.54 (agree) was the mean score for LinkedIn's Education section ability to help connect with others from the same university.

Table 35

Crosstabs of LinkedIn's Content & Interactions Utilization Perception

Question	N	Content & Interactions					Mean
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
I think that LinkedIn... Influences me to actively engage in strengthening relationships with my connections	102	4 (3.9%)	16 (15.7%)	47(46.1%)	22(21.6%)	13 (12.7%)	3.24 (100%)
Information on my news feed keeps me up-to-date with my connections professional lives	102	6 (5.9%)	11 (10.8%)	39 (38.2%)	32(31.4%)	14 (13.7%)	3.36 (100%)
Recommends connections relevant to my industry	102	3 (2.9%)	8 (7.8%)	38 (37.3%)	39(38.2%)	14 (13.7%)	3.52 (100%)
Education is a good tool to help me connect with others from my university	102	3 (2.9%)	3 (2.9%)	47 (46.1%)	34(33.3%)	15 (14.7%)	3.54 (100%)

Time Effectiveness Table 36 displays the students' perceptions of LinkedIn's time effectiveness in establishing and maintaining professional connections, 102 participants responded to this item. The mean score for LinkedIn's ability to make gathering current information on connections quicker was 3.06, indicating that students

shared a neutral perception of LinkedIn's ability to increase the effectiveness of their time in establishing and maintaining professional connections.

Table 36

Crosstabs of LinkedIn's Time Effectiveness Perception

Question	N	Time Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
I think that LinkedIn...							
Makes it quicker to gather current information on my connections	102	8 (7.8%)	20 (19.6%)	42 (41.2%)	22 (21.6%)	10 (9.8%)	3.06 (100%)

Overall Perceptions of Establishing and Maintaining Connections Table 37

represents students' mean score for their overall perception of LinkedIn for establishing and maintaining connections. The overall mean score for the 8 Likert items was 3.39, taken from a total of 102 participants. The findings for Research Question #1, establishing and maintaining a professional network via LinkedIn, indicated that overall students were neutral on LinkedIn's effectiveness of maintaining a professional network. The students agreed that LinkedIn was convenient for professional networking, but they were indifferent on the content and interaction and time effectiveness of LinkedIn's features.

Table 37

Crosstabs of Students' Overall Perception of Establishing and Maintaining Connections via LinkedIn

Question	N	Overall (Establishing & Maintaining)					Mean
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
I think that LinkedIn...							
Is convenient for professional networking	102	3	3	18	52	26	3.93
Is a viable alternative to traditional face-to-face networking	102	11	19	31	28	13	3.13
Helps to grow a sense of community and strengthens bonds between connections	102	6	12	38	32	14	3.35
Influences me to actively engage in strengthening relationships with my connections	102	4	16	47	22	13	3.24
Information on my news feed keeps me up-to-date with my connections professional lives	102	6	11	39	32	14	3.36
Recommends connections relevant to my industry	102	3	8	38	39	14	3.52
Education is a good tool to help me connect with others from my university	102	3	3	47	34	15	3.54
Makes it quicker to gather current information on my connections	102	8	20	42	22	10	3.06
Average Mean Score							3.39

Research Question #2

How do students utilize LinkedIn as a tool for professional networking and personal brand?

To answer the second research question, the researcher used various descriptive statistics to determine how students perceived LinkedIn as a professional networking

tool. Section 2 of the questionnaire (Appendix B) asked about students' utilization of LinkedIn. The 12 survey items from Section 2: 1-12 were used to measure students' utilization of LinkedIn. Participants' perceptions were captured by them indicating their utilization of LinkedIn by responding to closed-ended, ranking, and Likert Scale questions.

Length of Account Ownership There were 105 participants with LinkedIn accounts who responded to these survey item. Of the participants have owned LinkedIn accounts, 42% more than one year. Among them, 34 (32.4%) of the participants owned LinkedIn accounts between one to two years, but 20 (19%) participants had their LinkedIn accounts for the shortest time frame of one to one months. Table 38 shows the frequency and percentage of the participants LinkedIn account ownership.

Table 38

Frequency of LinkedIn Account Ownership

Ownership Timeframe	Frequency	Percentage
1-3 months	20	19%
4-6 months	22	21%
7-9 months	8	7.6%
10-12 months	11	10.5%
1-2 years	34	32.4%
2+ years	10	9.5%
Total	105	100%

Account Utilization There were 105 participants with LinkedIn accounts who responded to this survey item. Of the participants, 40 (38.1%) indicated that they never use their Linked in accounts. Two participants (1.9%) indicated that they used their

LinkedIn account every day. Table 39 displays students' frequency of utilization of LinkedIn.

Table 39

Frequency of LinkedIn Account Utilization

Frequency Rate	Frequency	Percentage
Daily	2	1.9%
Weekly	16	15.3%
Monthly	39	37.1%
Yearly	8	7.6%
Never	40	38.1%
Total	105	100%

How Students Access Accounts There were 105 participants with LinkedIn accounts who responded to this survey item. Sixty participants (57.1%) indicated that they access their LinkedIn accounts by a computer or laptop. None of the students accessed their account through a gaming system. Table 40 displays students' ways of accessing their LinkedIn account.

Table 40

Frequency of How Students Access Their LinkedIn Accounts

Site Access	Frequency	Percentage
Smartphone	42	40.0%
Computer/Laptop	60	57.1%
Tablet	3	02.9%
Gaming System	0	0.00%
Total	105	100%

LinkedIn Network Size There were 105 participants with LinkedIn accounts who responded to this survey item. Of the participants, 54 (51.4%) had a networks size between 0 to 10 people, 21 (20%) participants had a network size of 11-25 making that network size the second largest among participants, and none of the participants had a network size greater than 200 people. Table 41 displays students' LinkedIn network size.

Table 41

Frequency of Students' LinkedIn Network Size

Network Size	Frequency	Percentage
0-10	54	51.4%
11-25	21	20%
26-50	18	17.1%
50-100	9	8.6%
101-200	3	2.9%
200+	0	0%
Total	105	100%

Reasons for Using LinkedIn Seventy with LinkedIn accounts participants (66.7%) indicated that they used LinkedIn to both build their network/make new connections and to search for jobs. Table 42 displays students' reasons for using LinkedIn.

Table 42

Frequency of Students Reasons for Using LinkedIn

Reason for Using LinkedIn	N	Percentage
Build Network	70	66.7%
Job Seeking	70	66.7%
Posting Links	1	1%
Pro. Groups	25	23.8%
Main. Resume	41	39%
Keep in Touch	25	23.8%
News	22	21%
Search Engine Rank	7	6.7%
Advice	14	13.3%
Display Expertise	7	6.7%
Personal Brand	24	22.9%
Connecting w/ Delegates	17	16.2%
Digital Portfolio	6	5.7%

How Often Students Update Accounts There were 105 participants with LinkedIn accounts who responded to this survey item. Thirty-nine participants (37.1%) indicated that they never updated their LinkedIn accounts. Four participants (3.8%) indicated that they updated their account daily. Table 43 displays how often students update their LinkedIn accounts.

Table 43

Frequency of How Often Students Update Their LinkedIn Account

Frequency Rate	Frequency	Percentage
Daily	0	0%
Weekly	4	3.8%
Monthly	38	36.2%
Yearly	24	22.9%
Never	39	37.1%
Total	105	100%

Students Who Use LinkedIn to Search for Jobs There were 101 participants with LinkedIn accounts who responded to this survey item. Forty participants (39.6%) have used LinkedIn to search for jobs. Sixty-one (60.4%) of the participants indicated that they have never used LinkedIn to search for a job. Table 44 displays if students have used LinkedIn to search for a job.

Table 44

Frequency of Students Who Use LinkedIn to Search for Jobs

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	40	39.6%
No	61	60.4%
Total	101	100%

How Often Students Use LinkedIn to Search for Jobs There were 104 participants with LinkedIn accounts who responded to this survey item. Sixty-five participants (62.5%) did never used LinkedIn to search for a job. Two of participants

(1.9%) indicated that they updated their LinkedIn accounts daily. Table 45 displays how often students use LinkedIn to search for jobs.

Table 45

Frequency of How Often Students use LinkedIn to Search for Jobs

Question	Frequency	Percentage
Daily	2	1.9%
Weekly	3	2.9%
Monthly	14	13.5%
Yearly	20	19.2%
Never	65	62.5%
Total	104	100%

Students Offered a Job Via LinkedIn There were 104 participants with LinkedIn accounts who responded to this survey item. Nine participants (8.7%) indicated that they have been offered a job via LinkedIn. Table 46 displays if students have been offered a job via LinkedIn.

Table 46

Frequency of Students Offered a Job via LinkedIn

Question	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	9	8.7%
No	95	91.3%
Total	104	100%

Ranking of LinkedIn's Features There were 103 participants with LinkedIn accounts who responded to this survey item. In order to better understand the importance of LinkedIn's features, students' rankings were counted for each feature. As shown in

Table 47, 21 of the 103 students ranked the “build network” as #1 in importance and 14 ranked it #2 in importance. But the overall data showed that *building your network/make new connections, job seeking, and professional groups* were the highest rated items. Moreover, if averaged by students’ number of ranking, data showed *keeping in touch and maintaining their resume* were the most important features, with a mean of 4.5, and the digital portfolio was the least important feature, with a mean of 10.5, based on Table 48 interpretation of ranking scale. Table 49 displays the overall ranking of students’ perceptions of LinkedIn features from most important to least important.

Table 47

Crosstabs of Students' Ranking of the Importance of LinkedIn Features

Rank	Build Network	Job Seeking	Posting Links	Pro. Groups	Main. Resume	Keep in Touch	News	Search Engine Rank	Advice	Display Expertise	Personal Brand	Connecting w/ Delegates	Digital Portfolio
1	21	5	3	4	21	16	2	1	21		5	3	1
2	14	16	5	11	8	11	3	2	15	3	11	2	2
3	18	14	13	11	14	11	3		5	3	7	1	3
4	10	11	8	20	9	9	5	3	8	3	11	3	3
5	7	8	5	15	8	24	5	4	4	8	7	3	5
6	7	8	3	17	20	13	10	3	8	4	5	3	2
7	4	11	2	7	12	10	28	9	2	7	1	4	6
8	5	7	3	5	6	4	17	24	9	10	4	6	3
9	4	10	5	3			13	12	18	20	6	6	5
10	6	5	6	3	1	1	8	9	7	30	14	8	4
11	4	5	9	7	1	2	1	9	3	12	25	20	6
12	1	2	12		3	1	6	16	1	3	5	36	17
13	2	1	29			1	2	11	2		2	8	46
Total	103	103	103	103	103	103	103	103	103	103	103	103	103

Table 48

Interpretation Scale for the Importance of LinkedIn Features

Level of Importance	Range
Very Important	1 – 4
Moderately Important	5 – 8
Least Important	9 – 12

Table 49

Students' Ranking of the Importance of LinkedIn Features

LinkedIn Feature	Average Rank
Keep in Touch	4.5
Main. Resume	4.5
Build Network	4.52
Pro. Groups	5.23
Advice	5.39
Job Seeking	5.59
Personal Brand	7.29
News	7.38
Display Expertise	8.43
Posting Links	8.64
Search Engine Rank	9.15
Connecting w/ Delegates	9.91
Digital Portfolio	10.50

Who Students Network With Table 50 displays who students network with on LinkedIn. Seventy participants (66.7%) with LinkedIn accounts indicated that they networked with classmates. Sixty-seven (63.8%) of the participants with LinkedIn accounts indicated that they networked with friends.

Table 50

Frequency of Who Students Network With on LinkedIn

Question	Frequency	Percentage
Family	48	45.7%
Friends	67	63.8%
Classmates	70	66.7%
Alumni	40	38.1%
Colleagues	59	56.2%
Professors	32	30.5%
Friends or people in your network	20	19.0%
Strangers at your university	9	8.6%
Strangers in your field of Study	21	20.0%

How Often Students Promote Themselves The number of participants with LinkedIn accounts that responded to these items ranged from 103 to 105. The most frequently used feature to promote themselves *monthly* was, *include work experience on your LinkedIn account*, with 32 participants engaging in this activity. Table 51 displays how often students use outlined LinkedIn features to promote themselves.

Table 51

Frequency of How Often Students Promote Themselves on LinkedIn

Question	N	Time Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Yearly	Never
Post links to personal blogs	103	2	4	10	11	76
Upload professional profile picture to your LinkedIn account	105	1	3	16	41	44
Upload examples of your work	105	2	3	14	15	70
Actively participate in groups	105	2	1	15	10	77
Use a personal logo	104	1	2	10	9	82
Customize your LinkedIn URL	105	3	1	12	9	80
Customize your LinkedIn headline	105	1	2	17	20	65
Include work experience on your LinkedIn account	103	4	5	32	27	35
Include personal background summary on your LinkedIn profile	105	2	6	30	34	33
Use keywords to highlight your skills and endorsements on your LinkedIn profile	102	5	4	29	27	37
Include recommendations provided by peers and coworkers	104	2	4	21	23	54

The findings for Research Question #2 indicated that most of the students did not have their LinkedIn accounts for more than a year. It also revealed that the use of the site was infrequent because most students only used the site on a monthly bases or never. The infrequent use of the site was indicative by the network size; over 50% of the students had less than 10 people in their network. A total of approximately 75% of the students

had 25 people or less in their network. Students' main reason for using LinkedIn was to build their network. However, they tended to network with people that they already knew opposed to strangers in their fields. Also, it revealed that the job and personal branding features were rarely used.

Research Question #3

Is there a statistically significant difference in perceptions by demographics (sex, age, race, classification, and major) of LinkedIn's function, content and interactions, and time?

To answer the third research question, the researcher used t-test and ANOVA statistical analysis methods to determine whether or not there was a significant difference in perceptions by demographics of LinkedIn's functions, content and interactions, and time. Section 3 of the questionnaire (Appendix B) collected students' perceptions of LinkedIn in three distinct areas: *Functions*, *Content and Interactions*, and *Time*. The following 19 survey items from Section 3: 1a-11g, 2a-2i, and 3a-3c were used to measure students' perceptions of LinkedIn's functions, content and interaction, and time by demographics. Participants' perceptions were captured by them indicating the degree to which they believed LinkedIn was useful by responding to Likert Scale questions.

Functions

Students' perception of LinkedIn's functions by sex, the mean reported for males was 3.439 ($SD = .72506$). The mean reported for females students' perception of LinkedIn's functions was 3.444 ($SD = .58032$). The difference between the means was

not statistically significant at the .05 level [$F(1, 99) = .001, p = .972$]. Table 52 displays the ANOVA results for the participants' perceptions of LinkedIn's function by sex.

Table 52

ANOVA Summary Table of Perceptions of LinkedIn's Function by Sex

		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Students perception of LinkedIn's function by sex	Between Groups	.001	1	.001	.001	.972
	Within Groups	45.432	99	.459		
	Total	45.433	100			

Students' perception of LinkedIn's functions by race, the mean reported for Asian was 4.57 ($SD = 0$). The mean for Black was 3.390 ($SD = .66672$). The mean for Hispanics was 3.857 ($SD = 1.442$). The mean for Whites was 3.415 ($SD = .62780$). The differences among the means are not statistically significant at the .05 level [$F(3, 95) = 1.509, p = .217$]. Table 53 displays the ANOVA results of students' perceptions of LinkedIn's function by race.

Table 53

ANOVA Summary Table of Perceptions of LinkedIn's Function by Race

		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Students perception of LinkedIn's function by race	Between Groups	2.059	3	.686	1.509	.217
	Within Groups	43.210	95	.455		
	Total	45.269	98			

Students' perception of LinkedIn's functions by age, the mean reported for students between the ages 18-21 was 3.486 ($SD = .56469$). The mean reported for

students between ages 22-25 was 3.432 ($SD = .81219$). The mean reported for students between ages 26-29 was 3.171 ($SD = .54772$). The mean reported for students between ages 30+ was 1.8571 ($SD = 0$). The differences among the means are not statistically significant at the .05 level [$F(3, 9) = 2.275, p = .085$]. Table 54 presents the ANOVA results of students' perception of LinkedIn's functions by age.

Table 54

ANOVA Summary Table of Perceptions of LinkedIn's Function by Age

		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Students perception of LinkedIn's function by race	Between Groups	2.995	3	.998	2.275	.085
	Within Groups	42.123	96	.439		
	Total	45.117	99			

Students' perception of LinkedIn's functions by classification, the mean reported for freshmen was 3.428 ($SD = .43644$). The mean for sophomores was 3.494 ($SD = .70859$). The mean for juniors was 3.454 ($SD = .36691$). The mean for seniors was 3.453 ($SD = .83479$). The differences among the means were not statistically significant at the .05 level [$F(3,96) = .022, p = .996$]. Table 55 displays the ANOVA results of students' perception of LinkedIn's function by classification.

Table 55

ANOVA Summary Table of Perceptions of LinkedIn's Function by Classification

		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Students perception of LinkedIn's function by classification	Between Groups	.029	3	.010	.022	.996
	Within Groups	43.305	96	.451		
	Total	43.334	99			

Students' perception of LinkedIn's functions by major, the mean reported for Business Administration was 3.057 ($SD = .82052$). The mean for Mechanical Engineering was 3.450 ($SD = .54210$). The mean for Kinesiology was 3.687 ($SD = .69200$). The differences among the means that were statistically significant at the .05 level [$F(2, 97) = 5.498, p = .005$]. The LSD test with an alpha level of .05 indicated that participants majoring in Business Administration and Kinesiology had a mean difference of ($MD = .6307, p = .001$). The LSD test with an alpha level of .05 indicated that participants majoring in Business Administration and Mechanical Engineering had a mean difference of ($MD = .3930, p = .023$). Table 56 displays the ANOVA results of students' view on LinkedIn's function by major.

Table 56

ANOVA Summary Table of Perceptions of LinkedIn's Function by Major

		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Students perception of	Between Groups	4.594	2	2.297	5.498	.005
LinkedIn's function by	Within Groups	40.524	97	.418		
major	Total	45.117	99			

Content & Interactions

Students' perception of LinkedIn's content and interactions by sex, the mean reported for males was 3.446 ($SD = .79215$). The mean reported for females students' perception of LinkedIn's functions was 3.555 ($SD = .66825$). The difference between the means was not statistically significant at the .05 level [$F(1, 99) = .492, p = .485$]. Table

57 displays the ANOVA results for the participants' perceptions of LinkedIn's content and interactions by sex.

Table 57

ANOVA Summary Table of Perceptions of LinkedIn's Content & Interaction by Sex

		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Students perception of LinkedIn's content and Interaction by sex	Between Groups	.277	1	.277	.492	.485
	Within Groups	55.790	99	.564		
	Total	56.067	100			

Students' perception of LinkedIn's functions by age, the mean reported for students between the ages 18-21 was 3.519 ($SD = .69157$). The mean reported for students between ages 22-25 was 3.507 ($SD = .76757$). The mean reported for students between ages 26-29 was 3.222 ($SD = .43744$). The mean reported for students between ages 30+ was 1 ($SD = 0$). The differences among the means are not statistically significant at the .05 level [$F(3, 96) = 4.352, p = .006$]. Table 58 presents the ANOVA results of students' perception of LinkedIn's content and interaction by age.

Table 58

ANOVA Summary Table of Perceptions of LinkedIn's Content & Interaction by Age

		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Students perception of LinkedIn's content and Interaction by race	Between Groups	6.601	3	2.200	4.352	.006
	Within Groups	48.536	96	.506		
	Total	55.138	99			

Students' perception of LinkedIn's content and interaction by race, the mean reported for Asian was 4.111 ($SD = 0$). The mean for Black was 3.496 ($SD = .73567$). The mean for Hispanics was 4.083 ($SD = .71073$). The mean for Whites was 3.443 ($SD = .75621$). The differences among the means were not statistically significant at the .05 level [$F(3,95) = 1.159, p = .330$]. Table 59 displays the ANOVA results of students' perception of LinkedIn's content and interaction by race.

Table 59

ANOVA Summary Table of Perceptions of LinkedIn's Content & Interaction by Race

		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Students perception of LinkedIn's content and Interaction by race	Between Groups	1.965	3	.655	1.159	.330
	Within Groups	53.697	95	.565		
Total		55.662	98			

Students' perception of LinkedIn's content and interaction by classification, the mean reported for freshmen was 3.350 ($SD = .56990$). The mean for sophomores was 3.453 ($SD = 1.01578$). The mean for juniors was 3.571 ($SD = .45130$). The mean for seniors was 3.483 ($SD = .86677$). The differences among the means were not statistically significant at the .05 level [$F(3, 96) = .264, p = .852$]. Table 60 displays the ANOVA results of students' perception of LinkedIn's content and interaction by classification.

Table 60

ANOVA Summary Table of Perceptions of LinkedIn's Content & Interaction by Classification

		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Students perception of	Between Groups	.458	3	.153	.264	.852
LinkedIn's content and	Within Groups	55.586	96	.579		
Interaction by classification	Total	56.044	99			

Students' perception of LinkedIn's content and interaction by major, the mean reported for Business Administration was 3.206 ($SD = 1.067$), for Mechanical Engineering was 3.467 ($SD = .54225$), and for Kinesiology was 3.7243 ($SD = .75947$). The differences among the means were statistically significant at the .05 level [$F(2, 97) = 2.932, p = .058$]. The LSD test with an alpha level of .05 indicated that participants majoring in Business Administration and Kinesiology had a mean difference of ($MD = .51793, p = .018$). Table 61 displays the ANOVA results of students' perception of LinkedIn's content and interaction by major.

Table 61

ANOVA Summary Table of Perceptions of LinkedIn's Content & Interaction by Major

		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Students perception of	Between Groups	3.191	2	1.595	2.932	.058
LinkedIn's content and	Within Groups	52.790	97	.544		
Interaction by major	Total	55.981	99			

Time

Students' perception of LinkedIn's time by sex, the mean reported for males was 3.379 ($SD = .86978$). The mean reported for females students' perception of LinkedIn's functions was 3.486 ($SD = .68761$). The difference between the means was not statistically significant at the .05 level [$F(1, 100) = .413, p = .522$]. Table 62 displays the ANOVA results for the participants' perceptions of LinkedIn's time by sex.

Table 62

ANOVA Summary Table of Perceptions of LinkedIn's Time by Sex

		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Student's perception of	Between Groups	.270	1	.270	.413	.522
LinkedIn's time by	Within Groups	65.438	100	.654		
sex	Total	65.708	101			

Students' perception of LinkedIn's time by age, the mean reported for students between the ages 18-21 was 3.497 ($SD = .72549$). The mean reported for students between ages 22-25 was 3.3796 ($SD = .91253$). The mean reported for students between ages 26-29 was 3.2 ($SD = .50553$). The mean reported for students between ages 30+ was

1.333 ($SD = 0$). The differences among the means are not statistically significant at the .05 level [$F(3, 97) = 2.667, p = .052$]. Table 63 presents the ANOVA results of students' perception of LinkedIn's time by age.

Table 63

ANOVA Summary Table of Perceptions of LinkedIn's Time by Age

		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Student's perception of LinkedIn's time by age	Between Groups	5.006	3	1.669	2.667	.052
	Within Groups	60.695	97	.626		
	Total	65.701	100			

Students' perception of LinkedIn's time by race, the mean reported for Asian was 5 ($SD = 0$). The mean for Black was 3.533 ($SD = .74322$). The mean for Hispanics was 4 ($SD = 1.414$). The mean for Whites was 3.333 ($SD = .76858$). The differences among the means are not statistically significant at the .05 level [$F(3, 96) = 2.447, p = .069$]. Table 64 displays the ANOVA results of students' perceptions of LinkedIn's time by race.

Table 64

ANOVA Summary Table of Perceptions of LinkedIn's Time by Race

		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Student's perception of LinkedIn's time by race	Between Groups	4.618	3	1.539	2.447	.069
	Within Groups	60.400	96	.629		
	Total	65.018	99			

Students' perception of LinkedIn's time by classification, the mean reported for freshmen was 3.512 ($SD = .74056$). The mean for sophomores was 3.487 ($SD = .78899$).

The mean for juniors was 3.464 ($sd = .5393$). The mean for seniors was 3.375 ($SD = .94949$). The differences among the means were not statistically significant at the .05 level [$F(3,97) = .154, p = .927$]. Table 65 displays the ANOVA results of students' view on LinkedIn's time by classification.

Table 65

ANOVA Summary Table of Perceptions of LinkedIn's Time by Classification

		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Students perception of LinkedIn's time by classification	Between Groups	.302	3	.101	.154	.927
	Within Groups	63.375	97	.653		
	Total	63.677	100			

Students' perception of LinkedIn's time by major, the mean reported for Business Administration was 3.111 ($SD = .91490$). The mean for Mechanical Engineering was 3.371 ($SD = .75860$). The mean for Kinesiology was 3.7037 ($SD = .71213$). The differences among the means that were statistically significant at the .05 level [$F(2, 98) = 3.507, p = .034$]. The LSD test with an alpha level of .05 indicated that participants majoring in Business Administration and Kinesiology had a mean difference of ($MD = .5926, p = .011$). Table 66 displays the ANOVA results of students' view on LinkedIn's time by major.

Table 66

ANOVA Summary Table of Perceptions of LinkedIn's Time by Major

		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Students perception of	Between Groups	4.284	2	2.142	3.507	.034
LinkedIn's time by	Within Groups	59.850	98	.611		
Major	Total	64.134	100			

The findings for research question #3 indicated that overall the perceptions of the students towards LinkedIn were the same when compared by various demographics. The various demographics' were analyzed to find out if there was a significant difference in their perception of LinkedIn's: *function, content and interaction*, and *time*. Major was the only demographic to have a significant difference between function, content and interaction, and time. There was a significant difference between Business Administration and Kinesiology students' perception of LinkedIn's *function, content and interaction*, and *time*. There were no significant differences for demographics: classification, race, age, and sex.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the study and to present conclusions and recommendations for further research. The purpose of this study was to examine how college students perceive LinkedIn as a tool for professional networking. This chapter presents the findings and discussion, conclusion, and recommendations for future research.

Overview of the Study

This study looked at students use and perception of LinkedIn as a professional networking tool. There was a total of 359 participants who took part in this study, with a total of 105 respondents who had LinkedIn accounts. The study looked at differences between students with independent variables including: sex, race, age, classification, graduation date, and major. The data were analyzed using SPSS 21 statistical software. The statistical methods used for analyzing the data included descriptive statistics and ANOVA.

Finding and Discussion

Data for this study were collected from an average of 105 participants from a population of 359 participants. Descriptive statistics, along with t-test and ANOVA were used to analyze the participants' responses. Males with LinkedIn account doubled female

users with 64% of LinkedIn account owners being male. Seniors accounted for about half (47%) of account owners, followed by juniors with 28%. Business Administration only accounted for 21% of account holders, less than half of the 53% that the Mechanical Engineers made up. However, Business Administration majors had the largest percentage of their user to actually use LinkedIn. Business Administration majors had 55% of their account holders use LinkedIn on a monthly bases, comparatively Mechanical Engineers and Kinesiology majors both only had 33% of their account holders to use the site monthly. Most students regardless of classification or major had a small network size. Out of the 4 classifications, 52% of them had a network size of 0-10, and out of the 3 majors, 51% of them had a network size of 0-10. The job features of LinkedIn were not very popular with the participants. Only 39 (39%) of students regardless of classification or major had used LinkedIn to search for a job. Of those 39 students, 20 used LinkedIn yearly to search for a job.

The first research question was “How do students perceive LinkedIn as a tool for *establishing and maintaining professional networks/connections*”? The overall mean score for students’ perception of LinkedIn as tool for establishing and maintaining professional social networks was 3.39, indicating that students were neutral as to whether or not LinkedIn was effective in helping them establishing and maintaining professional networks. This score was calculated by adding eight items from the three subcategories in the Perceptions section of the survey dealing with networking. Notably the students found LinkedIn to be a convenient tool for *professional networking*, but did not find most of the aspects (functions, content and interaction, and time) of the site to be particularly

useful. The high mean score for *convenience of professional networking* could be due to the fact that students know that LinkedIn is a professional networking site.

The convenience of LinkedIn's *ability to network professionally* was rated the highest among the participants. Its (LinkedIn) *ability to gather current information about one's connections* was ranked the lowest with a mean score of 3.06, most students just agreeing that it was useful in this area. From the comments collected from the open-ended question, it is evident that students with LinkedIn accounts are not aware of how to fully utilize LinkedIn. Students made comments such as LinkedIn having a wiki-style format, they are unaware of how to use it, it is only good for prospecting, and stated that Facebook is easier for networking. Another notable comment that was made by students with LinkedIn accounts is that they didn't use it due to its lack of popularity.

The second research question was "How do students utilize LinkedIn as a tool for professional networking and personal brand"?

Thirty-four students had their LinkedIn accounts between 1-2 years, and 29 of those 34 were either juniors or seniors, making it the largest timeframe of account ownership. Many of the students revealed that they had LinkedIn accounts but never used them; 40 (38.1%) students indicated that they never used their LinkedIn account. From the comments collected from the open-ended question, students who have LinkedIn accounts do not use it because they do not know anyone who uses it or they are not sure how to utilize it. One student stated: "I've never used it and I don't really see the need while I'm still in school". The relatively short timeframes that students have LinkedIn accounts can be attributed to most not having had any job experience and their perception of that being one of the criteria for the site.

Computers proved to be the way that the majority of the participants accessed their LinkedIn account with 57.1% indicating that they accessed their account this way. LinkedIn is a social media site that requires the entry of a lot of text initially. Because of this desktops and laptops are ideal for entering data and uploading files to complete accounts. Most of the participants (51.4%) had a network size of ten or less. In comparison Facebook users between the ages of 18-24 had an average of 649 people in their network (Statista, 2014). Compared to other popular social networking sites (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Pinterest) in the United States, LinkedIn has the smallest percentage of active daily users (Richter, 2015). Due to the professional nature of LinkedIn, it is hypothesized that students shy away from LinkedIn because of the nature of the content they generally post on social media sites.

The participants' reasons for using LinkedIn were varied. Building their network and searching for jobs tied for the top reasons they used the site, both with 66.7% of the participants indicating their use of LinkedIn for these reasons. Thirty seven percent of the participants never updated their LinkedIn accounts. Juniors and seniors accounted for the majority of the users who never updated their accounts with 24 of the 39 inactive students being juniors or seniors. Given the fact that they made up the 75% of the participants with LinkedIn accounts, this isn't surprising. The participants who updated their accounts monthly were the largest active group with 36.2% doing so.

Most of the participants (60.4%) have never used LinkedIn to search for a job, only 20 (19.2%) used it yearly for job searches. Given the fact that most students who use LinkedIn mainly use the basic features, in addition to the lack of knowledge on how to use the site, and that most students searched for jobs closer to their senior year in college,

this is to be expected. Nine of the participants indicated that they have been offered a job via LinkedIn. Students believed that building their network, maintaining their resume, and advice were the most important features on LinkedIn. The features that students viewed least important were posting links and digital portfolio. None of the students thought that displaying their expertise was the most important feature on LinkedIn. Individuals that students networked with favored people that students already knew, most of them networked with friends and classmates. Very few indicated that they networked with strangers only 9 (8.7%) networked with strangers from their university. With a mean score of 4.26, students used the features and tools on LinkedIn to promote themselves and build their personal brand on a monthly basis. Including work experience was the most frequent thing that students did to promote themselves on LinkedIn, with a mean score of 3.82.

The third research question was: “Is there a statistically significant difference in perceptions by demographics (sex, age, race, classification, and major) of LinkedIn’s function, content and interactions, and time”?

There were only three instance of significant difference between the majors and their perceptions of LinkedIn’s function, content and interactions, and time.

1. In the *function* category, there was a significant difference in majors between the Business Administration and Kinesiology and Business Administration and Mechanical Engineering majors.
2. In the *content* and interactions category, there was a significant difference in majors between the Business Administration and Kinesiology majors.

3. In the *time* category, there was a significant difference in majors between the Business Administration and Kinesiology majors.

Due to the nature of their majors, it is hypothesized that Business Administration majors understand the value of LinkedIn more so than their peers majoring in Kinesiology. From the comments collected from the open-ended question, some Kinesiology students indicated that it seemed like LinkedIn was gear more towards business related majors instead of health related majors. Another possible reason is that Kinesiology students could be less aware of LinkedIn, with a strong emphasis on health and sports those students are more prone to be more familiar with websites and apps in that area.

Conclusions

Professional networking is a cornerstone in one's professional career. It gives individuals access to things that they normally would not be able to obtain on their own. This study was conducted to conclude how college students engaged with LinkedIn as well as how they perceived the social media site. The conclusions that are supported from the data based on this study on college students' perceptions and utilization of LinkedIn are:

A small percentage of college students have LinkedIn accounts, and the number of those with an account that actively uses it is even smaller. The overwhelming majority of students who used LinkedIn use their free services. The research revealed that males tend to use the social media site more than females. It is concluded that Business Administration students use LinkedIn more than students majoring in Mechanical

Engineering and Kinesiology. This could be a result of Business Administration students being more informed about LinkedIn compared to the other students.

Mechanical Engineer students without LinkedIn accounts (both those who planned on creating one soon and those who did not want one) generally knew what it was and had some idea of how it worked. These students also gave the most detailed responses in the optional written comment section of the survey. In regards to account utilization, over half of the students had their account for at least 10 months. However, almost half of the students with LinkedIn accounts never use them. The study indicated that those who do use their LinkedIn account do so on an infrequent basis, with most only using the account monthly for any given reason.

The network size of students is small with half of them 10 or less people in their network. In addition a total of approximately 75% of the students have no more than 25 people in their network on LinkedIn. Given the small network size and the infrequent use of the social media site, it can be concluded that students are not investing much time in networking professionally online via LinkedIn. Some of those reasons include: lack of knowledge about LinkedIn, how to use LinkedIn, how to network, and the importance of networking early on. The results revealed that students are more prone to network with people that they are already acquainted with such as family and friends. Based on the results focusing on LinkedIn's job functions, it is concluded that LinkedIn's job features are not important to students. Most students do not use LinkedIn to search for jobs. Those that do, do not use these features often, and only several have been offered a job via LinkedIn. Not enough detailed information on the job feature was collected to determine the reasons students don't use this feature. It is hypothesized by the researcher that it is

due to the lack of understanding and knowledge of this feature, as well as Career Center's minimal efforts in educating students on the array of LinkedIn features and how to use them.

Personal branding is something that students moderately participated in on LinkedIn compared to networking the most used feature on the site with students. This is concluded from the research results indicating that students ranked personal branding in the middle of a list of features of what they found important on LinkedIn; while networking was near the top of the list. Students rarely used features and tools such as: custom LinkedIn URL, links to other personal sites, personal logos, upload examples of work, and participate in groups, to promote themselves or their skills. The result concluded that overall students do not take advantage of LinkedIn to build or promote their personal brand. However, students were most active promoting themselves by doing things such as: highlighting work experience, including a personal summary, and using keywords to highlight skills.

In conclusion the results from the research enables the conclusion that students do not perceive LinkedIn particularly useful or not useful when establishing and maintaining professional connections. From the results, it is concluded that in general students perceived and used LinkedIn the same. Students thought that the functions of LinkedIn were useful, but they were neutral as to the benefit of the sites content and interaction and time.

Recommendations

This research study focused on students' utilization and perception of LinkedIn. Based on the findings of this study, there are several areas that are suggested for future research. These recommendations include:

1. Findings in this study revealed that students did not use LinkedIn frequently nor did they perceive it to be particularly useful for professional networking. Future research could investigate the reasons that students who use LinkedIn do so infrequently.
2. The research showed that most students do not have a LinkedIn account. Future research should focus on collecting qualitative data to find out why students are not using LinkedIn to network professionally or to establish their personal brand, also it should investigate whether or not students are using an alternative site to network professionally online.
3. Based on the finding of the study, it is recommended that future research investigates whether or not students have been educated on professional networking and LinkedIn and how to properly use it.
4. It is recommended to survey career centers to find out if and how they are promoting LinkedIn to students.
5. It was shown by the research that students did not make use of features that added customization to their LinkedIn account. Future research could look at why students are not putting forth the effort to customize their LinkedIn accounts in greater detail.

6. The research showed that students did not heavily use LinkedIn to search for jobs. It is recommended that future research looks at how familiar students are with LinkedIn's job features and why they do not use it more frequently.
7. From the research, it is concluded that many of the features of LinkedIn were not used by students. Future research could be conducted to conclude what features could be improved or added to foster more student engagement.
8. Future research should look at whether or not students who use LinkedIn more than others are receiving more benefits from the site, as well as to what those perceived benefits are.
9. Future research should compare and contrast a larger number of diverse majors.
10. More universities should be surveyed and compared to each other in their uses and perceptions of LinkedIn.

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APPENDIX A
COLLEGE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF LINKEDIN

Section 1: Demographic

1. What is your sex?
 - a. Female
 - b. Male

2. What is your race?
 - a. Indian/Alaskan Native
 - b. Asian
 - c. Black
 - d. Hispanic
 - e. International
 - f. Multiracial
 - g. Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
 - h. Unknown
 - i. White

3. What is your age?
 - a. 18-21
 - b. 22-25
 - c. 26-29
 - d. 30+

4. What is your classification?
 - a. Freshman
 - b. Sophomore
 - c. Junior
 - d. Senior

5. When will you graduate?
 - a. Fall 2014
 - b. Spring 2015
 - c. Summer 2015
 - d. Fall 2015
 - e. Spring 2016
 - f. Summer 2016
 - g. Fall 2016
 - h. Spring 2017
 - i. Summer 2017
 - j. Fall 2017
 - k. Spring 2018
 - l. Summer 2018
 - m. Fall 2018
 - n. Spring 2019
 - o. Summer 2019 or later

6. What is your major?
 - a. Business Administration
 - b. Mechanical Engineering
 - c. Kinesiology
7. Are you currently employed?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
8. Do you have a LinkedIn account?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No, but I will create one soon
 - c. No, I do not want a LinkedIn account
9. What Type of LinkedIn Account do you have?
 - a. Free
 - b. Business
 - c. Business plus
 - d. Personal plus
10. If you have a “Free” LinkedIn account, have you ever had a premium account?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

Section 2: Utilization

1. How long have you had your LinkedIn account?
 - a. 1-3 months
 - b. 4-6 months
 - c. 7-9 months
 - d. 10-12 months
 - e. 1-2 years
 - f. 2+ years
2. How often do you use LinkedIn, i.e. communicate with others, read industry news, etc?
(Choose one)
 - a. Daily
 - b. Weekly
 - c. Monthly
 - d. Yearly
 - e. Never
3. What is the primary way that you access your LinkedIn account?
 - a. Smartphone

- b. Computer/Laptop
 - c. Tablet
 - d. Gaming System
4. How many people are in your LinkedIn network?
- a. 0-10
 - b. 11-25
 - c. 26-50
 - d. 51-100
 - e. 101-200
 - f. 200+
5. How often do you update your LinkedIn profile, i.e. post new experiences, post new skills, upload samples of your work? (Choose one)
- a. Daily
 - b. Weekly
 - c. Monthly
 - d. Yearly
 - e. Never
6. Have you used LinkedIn to search for a job?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
7. How often do you use LinkedIn to search for jobs? (Choose one)
- a. Daily
 - b. Weekly
 - c. Monthly
 - d. Yearly
 - e. Never
8. Have you been offered a job via LinkedIn?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
9. What are the reasons that you use LinkedIn? (Select all that apply)
- a. Build your network/make new connections
 - b. Job seeking
 - c. Posting links to other personal sites (i.e. Twitter, blogs, etc.)
 - d. Professional groups
 - e. Maintain and update resume
 - f. Keep in touch
 - g. Obtaining relevant news in your industry
 - h. Improve rank in search engines
 - i. Advice from network

- j. Perform and demonstrate your expertise
 - k. Build reputation/personal brand
 - l. Contacting with delegates after network meeting
 - m. Provide samples of your work (digital portfolio)
 - n.
10. Rank the following 12 items in order from 1-12, where 1 is the most important and 12 is the least important concerning the use of LinkedIn.
- a. Professional groups
 - b. Advice from network
 - c. Posting links to other personal sites (i.e. Twitter, blogs, etc.)
 - d. Keep in touch with existing contacts
 - e. Maintain and update resume
 - f. Build your network/make new connections
 - g. Obtaining relevant news in your industry
 - h. Improve rank in search engines
 - i. Job seeking
 - j. Perform and demonstrate your expertise
 - k. Build reputation/personal brand
 - l. Contacting with delegates after network meeting
 - m. Provide samples of your work (digital portfolio)
11. Who do you network with on LinkedIn? (Select all that apply)
- a. Friends
 - b. Family
 - c. Classmates
 - d. Alumni
 - e. Colleagues
 - f. Professors
 - g. Friends of people in your network (Friend-of-a-Friend)
 - h. Strangers at your university
 - i. Strangers in your field of study
12. How often do you do the following do you do to promote yourself and your skills on LinkedIn? (Select all that apply)
- a. Post links to personal websites or blogs
 - b. Upload professional profile picture
 - c. Upload examples of your work
 - d. Actively participate in groups
 - e. Use a personal logo
 - f. Customize your LinkedIn URL
 - g. Customize your LinkedIn headline
 - h. Include work experience on your LinkedIn account
 - i. Include a personal background summary on your LinkedIn profile

- j. Use keywords to highlight your skills and endorsements on your LinkedIn account
- k. Include recommendations provided by peers and coworkers

Section 3: Perceptions

How do you view LinkedIn? Please rate the following from 1-5 where 1 is Strongly Disagree and 5 is Strongly Agree:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
(1) Functions: I think that LinkedIn.....					
(a) Is convenient for professional networking					
(b) Is easy to use					
(c) Is a viable alternative to traditional face-to-face networking					
(d) Helps to grow a sense of community and strengthens bonds between connections					
(e) Invades privacy					
(f) Is useful for finding a job					
(g) Is useful for displaying samples of my work (resume, documents, video, audio, etc.)					
(2) Content & Interactions I think that.....					
(a) is a good tool to use to elaborate your skills and abilities					
(b) the job recommendations are relevant to positions I'm looking for					
(c) LinkedIn influences me to actively engage in strengthening relationships with my connections					
(d) the information on my news feed keeps me up to date with my connections professional lives					
(e) LinkedIn recommends connections relevant to my industry					
(f) the companies (that I follow) provide insightful information concerning my industry					
(g) the groups (that I follow) provide insightful information concerning my industry					
(h) that Pulse provides insightful information concerning my industry					
(i) the Education is a good tool to help me connect with others from my university					
(3) Time: I think that LinkedIn....					
(a) makes it quicker to gather current information on my connections					
(b) is more effective for finding a job in my field compared to other online job boards and websites					
(c) connections and peers reply to questions quicker on LinkedIn than they do via email					

1. Is there any other feedback that you would like to provide about your perceptions and use

of LinkedIn as tool for establishing and creating professional networks?

2. Please enter your MSU email address if you would like to be entered in the \$50 Visa gift card drawing!