

Gone Fishin':

A social media marketing project in collaboration
with the Panguitch Lake General Store

A capstone project submitted to Southern Utah University
in Partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of:
Masters of Art in Professional Communication

April 2018

Kaitlin Johnston

Capstone Chair:

Art Challis, Ed.D

Executive Summary

For this project, I researched the effects of social media marketing on small tourism businesses using social marketing theory as a base and applied it the Panguitch Lake General Store in the resort community of Panguitch Lake, Utah, owned by Jerry and Jeannie Owens. The Panguitch Lake area includes camping (forest service and primitive camping), summer homes, 30 year-round residents, and other tourism businesses (resorts, boat docks, etc.). The Panguitch Lake General Store is the main hub at the lake, providing the only gas and propane in the area, a wide assortment of groceries, fishing supplies, camping supplies, and is the prominent distributor of Utah State fishing and hunting licenses for the area.

Research on this niche field of social media marketing for small tourism businesses is still in its early stages, but information on how this form of marketing can positively impact business growth is known based on research conducted on small and large businesses (Brown, Spillman, Lee & Lu, 2014). Yet this research is not qualified as much as it needs to be as a niche market to expand the field. Therefore, this project is essential in furthering mine and business owners' understanding of small tourism marketing and branding through social media platforms.

Through this project I analyzed customer behavior to understand audience expectations and needs of communication. Based on the business owners, workers, and target market audience, I determined Facebook would be a good starting point, and if we saw success with this platform, we would expand our social media to Instagram and a plug and play website through Wix as further online promoters of information and branding.

Acknowledgements

I will be forever grateful for my experiences here in the MAPC program, and the opportunity to expand my skillset and knowledge in this field through the support and encouragement from the amazing program faculty. I would not have the understanding and confidence in communication studies to approach the workforce without my professors' influence. So I thank the graduate committee for accepting me into this program and giving me a chance to grow.

I would like to thank Dr. Art Challis for working with me on a project I can be proud of and that encompasses the quality of this graduate program. I would like to thank Professor Jonathan Holiman for introducing me to social media programs and tactics that will help me even further as I continue this project. I would also like to thank all the graduate professors for helping me understand the communication field: Dr. Matt Barton for guiding me through the program, Dr. Jon Smith for introducing me to the theories that I used during my studies here, Dr. Kevin Stein for pushing me to learn and do more, Dr. Gavin Feller for showing me new ways to create and share stories, and Dr. Lijie Zhou for believing in me and trusting me with opportunities to help the program and expand my skillset.

Finally, I would like to thank Jerry and Jeannie Owens at the Panguitch Lake General Store for letting me collaborate with them on with this project.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary2

Acknowledgments.....3

Introduction.....5

Literature Review.....7

 Research Questions.....12

Methods.....12

Analysis.....17

Conclusion.....20

References.....23

Appendix A: Social Media Plan.....25

Appendix B: Selected Facebook Posts.....34

Appendix C: Selected Journal Entries.....44

Appendix D: Visuals.....47

Appendix E: Project Consent.....48

Introduction

According to a 2016 study conducted by the Small Business Administration, over ninety percent of businesses in the United States are classified as small businesses, being comprised of an amount employees that correlate with the amount of receipts/purchases a business accumulates in a year (SBA, 2016), or in other words, a business that accrues revenue less than 35.5 million and has an employee size of less than 1,500 (Hernandez, 2010). This generic label of small business is an umbrella that covers the various sectors within the small business world, such as retail, services, tourism, etc. Though these sectors are classified as small businesses, each will function differently, and therefore marketing strategies will differ based on the type of service, especially in the tourism field. Within tourism, businesses work to sell an experience or adventure with corresponding products rather than just a product, therefore, marketing and promotional tactics will naturally differ from other small business classifications (Morello, 2017). These efforts are focused on the promotion of information just as much, if not more, than a product or service offered by the tourism business.

Tourism businesses and destinations have demographics reaching outside of their local community (Rowett, 2016), and because of this, businesses need to implement tactics that will dually inform and persuade their audience to invest in their product/experience through platforms that can reach the audience feasibly while being socially and financially practical for the business. Through the studies I have read, I believe that the most effective way of doing this is through social media marketing with a base of social marketing theory where researchers discovered that if a social issue was packaged and sold like a product, there would be greater audience interest.

Due to the nature of their services, tourism businesses need to focus their marketing efforts on promotion of experience and products through information. Communication between the business and the consumer is essential in building a brand and a following for tourism businesses. Again, this can be accomplished across a wide audience through social media marketing where communication can succeed in creating a community. This was the case for the Panguitch Lake General store in Panguitch Lake, Utah.

Panguitch Lake, Utah is a recreational community which has grown around a natural lake that was expanded for Panguitch town farmers. When the lake was expanded, there was a greater draw in tourism for both Utahans and southern Nevadans, mostly, with the promise of outdoor adventures and activities like fishing, camping, ATV riding, and hiking. Resorts soon jumped on the tourism opportunity, and in the mid-1980s, the General Store was built and soon became the central community hub for the area in terms of lake information, fishing licenses, souvenirs, and camping needs (groceries, S'mores and cobbler supplies, fishing/camping supplies, souvenirs, etc.). As the central hub for the Lake, classified by the nature of the business and the local expertise provided by the owner and employees, it is important that this business finds ways to be accessible and communicate easily and effectively with their audience when they are at the lake or at home, which can be done through a social media presence. This expansion of brand awareness helped not only the General Store, but the other local tourism businesses and community as a whole, especially when online and in-person messages and promotions are constructed through social marketing theory.

In order to achieve the communication goals needed to grow the business and area population, I re-created the store's Facebook page as the main wave of information access. Based on our audience of Utah and Nevada families looking for summer adventures, Facebook was a

great start to social media marketing, and we were able to stretch across our audience easily through this medium. If this Facebook page becomes a success based on the goals I have set in the social media plan, then I planned to grow our plan to include an Instagram profile and a Wix website for the business and the audience to maneuver and receive information about the General Store and the Lake.

I believe studying this niche form of marketing in greater depth is beneficial to how social media marketing affects the different aspects of small tourism businesses. The tourism world is responsible for a significant portion of the United States' economic output (SelectUSA, 2017), and understanding how social media marketing benefits this field will give way for more creative, expansive marketing that will yield even greater results within the tourism field and the surrounding economic area.

Literature Review

Small tourism businesses are often the driving economic and social force behind a tourism area or town (Brown, Spillman, Lee, & Lu, 2014; Koens & Thomas, 2015). This economic and social strength is built through community relations, which means small tourism businesses like the Panguitch Lake General Store need to be an active member of the local community, as defined by cabin or land owners in the case of Panguitch Lake, as well as build a community between the business and their audience that reaches the locals and beyond. These communities are built through productive communication, and small tourism businesses need to implement this communication in their marketing tactics, which I believe can be achieved successfully through social media marketing with a base of social marketing theory.

Social Media Marketing

Social media platforms have existed since the beginning of the internet in the late 1990s (Baker, 2015), so it was almost natural for these mediums to gain usage as the internet grew since the internet is a tool of information and communication. Social media outlets grew steadily until there was a boom in social media in the late 2000s and early 2010s with Facebook at the forefront of this boom followed by Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, etc. (Baker, 2015; Ashley & Tuten, 2015). Though these mediums began in the United States, they have reached users worldwide, and each now has millions of active monthly users (Baker, 2015; Greenwood, Perrin, & Duggan, 2016). These social media platforms were initially meant solely for users to communicate with one another, yet businesses recognized the potential for marketing abilities through these platforms and soon jumped on these opportunities.

Social media consumers provide personal information on these forums that are available to the public, and this is beneficial for marketers as they understand their audiences' interests then enact a marketing plan catered to their target audience (Greenwood, Perrin & Duggan, 2016; Morello, 2017; Rowett, 2017). The next step is advertising through these social media platforms and building communication between businesses and their target audiences. This communication allows customers to feel as though they are a part of and have an effect on the business, which in turn enhances brand awareness and loyalty. This loyalty enhances profits and aids in reaching a greater audience (Mizrachi & Sellitto, 2015; Nobre & Silva, 2014).

Examples of successful social marketing plans have been seen across every major social media platform through advertising, profiles, consumer communication, etc. as consumers scroll through their social media feeds. Online monthly beauty subscription service Birchbox sought to grow brand awareness, so they implemented a Facebook campaign for mobile devices to show the products and best ways to use them, and the results showed they “outperformed other content

with a 35% increase...and 70% of website traffic coming directly from mobile” (AdEspresso, 2017). Travel search engine Kayak sought to stand out against their competitors, so they took to Facebook for campaigning, and through the use of motion graphics they reached 2.1 million people overnight which lead to an increase in site traffic (AdEspresso, 2017). Chinese restaurant chain P.F. Chang’s wanted to expand their platform by enacting a sweepstakes, and through their targeted Facebook marketing, they had “3 times higher click-through rate overall” (AdEspresso, 2017).

From these few examples, we can see that social media advertising techniques are great for large businesses that have the creative capacities to initiate large campaigns, which is where the focus of social media marketing has landed for the most part (Koens & Thomas, 2015). Little research has been done on how social media can be an effective tool in small business marketing (Kumar, et. al., 2016; Mizrachi, et. al. 2015; Nobre & Silva, 2014), but the research that has been conducted is beneficial to not only small businesses, but tourism as well (Brown, et. al., 2014; Koens & Thomas, 2015). While larger business firms have the financial ability to run extensive advertising and marketing campaigns, small businesses often do not have the financial or physical capabilities to run such promotions (Torlak, 2005). Social media and personalized business branding can be an impactful solution (Boling et. al., 2014; Mizrachi & Selitto, 2015; Nobre & Silva, 2014; Torlak, 2005).

However, small businesses can yield positive outcomes from their use of social media marketing as well, and social media platforms have made it simple for these small businesses to reach their audience and create content specifically for the consumer. Therefore, social media marketing can be effective for small businesses, specifically the niche market of small tourism businesses. Through building a social media presence, small businesses will be able to build a

brand, communication, and a relationship with their audience (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Kumar et. al., 2016). This is particularly helpful in tourism because one of the main goals in tourism marketing is information and site promotion: local updates, upcoming activities, new products, etc. (Brown & Spillman, 2014; Mizrachi & Selitto, 2015; Torlak, 2005).

The advantage of small business social media marketing compared to that of large businesses is the ability to personalize each message to the different audience sectors, which is much easier and more productive in building a community. Personalized content initiates further communication between the business and the customer, and this communication is what makes the audience feel like they are a part of the community. Because a main goal of small tourism business marketing is to create a strong line of communication between the consumer and the business by means of selling an experience and adventure, social media is an essential tool within the field of small tourism marketing.

With any marketing plan, it is important to know who the target audience is and what they value so the line of communication can be optimized. More often than not, the target market audiences for small tourism businesses are families, and their common interests and values are associated with the family unit (Morello, 2017; Rowett, 2016).

While this is the main market for the Panguitch Lake General Store in Panguitch Lake, Utah, the store and other small tourism businesses have a wide range of visitors, and it is important to keep in contact with every sector of the target audience. As I have previously suggested, social media with an emphasis on the target audience's values and interests is the best way to keep communication open in order to build a community, which in turn will help the business grow socially and economically. It is important to consider marketing tactics through the lens of social marketing theory to optimize social interest.

Social Marketing Theory

Kolter and Zaltman pioneered social marketing theory in 1971 on the basis of selling social values and interests as companies did with products. Social marketing theory focuses on using product advertising techniques to promote or sell social values and interests, because these social interests and values wrapped in product packaging had a greater and more productive impact than traditional promotional tactics, suggesting, “An increasing number of non-business institutions have begun to examine marketing logic as a means to furthering their institutional goals and products” (Kolter & Zaltman, 1971, p. 3). Essentially, in order to keep steady growth within a company, businesses and marketers need to not only consider audience trends and interests, but find ways to implement them in their marketing schemes to have a greater audience appeal.

Though this study was conducted nearly fifty years ago, this information is as applicable today as when it was published, possibly even more so with the technological growth we have seen in the past twenty years through the internet and social media platforms. With social marketing, consumers view social interests as products they want to invest in and share with others who may have similar interests. Marketers have recognized the value in this type of personalized communication between the business, or cause, and the consumer, and they have utilized this tactic to promote social values and interests.

In understanding how social marketing works to promote social values and norms, it seems logical that this theory could be useful not just in social media, but in an almost opposite or backwards manner. Social values and norms are obviously important which is why social marketing theory promotes them as products, so would it be possible to sell products or tourism attractions using the same structure? In current media, sharing personal values is a popular

theme, whether a byproduct of social marketing theory or not, and this version of self-expression can be used through social marketing and social media marketing. Marketers and business owners can evaluate and analyze their customer base and make sure their advertising tactics align with their audiences' values.

For the audience of Panguitch Lake General Store, family activities and adventures are an important value. In social marketing theory, businesses would promote familial values through an activity or product like the Lake, but since this is already a value for our clientele, why not sell the experience based on these social values? Taking this approach to social media marketing may be beneficial in promoting a small tourism business and the tourism area.

Therefore, in an attempt to build brand awareness/loyalty and a community with their widespread audience and locals, I created a social media presence for the Panguitch Lake General Store through a Facebook page to promote information based on social values and interests. With this in mind, the following research questions were proposed for this project:

Research Questions

RQ1: How will this new take on social marketing theory effect promotional tactics for the small tourism business of the Panguitch Lake General Store and their clientele?

RQ2: How will branding function after social media has been set in place?

Methods

For this project, I analyzed how social media marketing with the base of social marketing theory affects the Panguitch Lake General Store's audience; therefore, I have taken a qualitative approach to this project and will seek to determine effectiveness through post reach and response on the Facebook platform. I chose to focus on Facebook as the main social media platform due to the store's target market audience of locals that fit in the 60-95 age range living in their summer

homes and southern Nevada families seeking adventure and an escape from the desert heat. Since Facebook still acts as the leader of social media platforms constituting nearly eighty percent of online users as of 2016 (Greenwood, Perrin, & Duggan, 2016), this was a useful tool in creating communication that would reach the audience and build a community. From 2015 to 2016, Pew research saw an increase in Facebook usage of seven percent, which is partially due to the increasing amount of older adults joining this social media platform (Greenwood, Perrin & Duggan, 2016). Therefore, Facebook is an effective communication tool for businesses large and small. In order to achieve immediate, significant results, I chose to take the first steps toward a social media presence with this platform.

Garfield County, where both Panguitch Lake and Bryce Canyon are located, released reports for the 2016 year showing that the main source of income for the county comes from tourism; however, they do not separate Panguitch Lake from Bryce Canyon (University of Utah, 2016). Even with this technicality, local tourism businesses including Panguitch Lake that also cater to Bryce Canyon are the driving economic force for Garfield County, so working to expand a social media presence will help the economic presence of Panguitch Lake, even starting with a Facebook page to pique interest.

There are definite benefits of initiating social media marketing for any business (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Beese, 2015; Kumar, Bezawaa, Rishika, Jankiraman, & Kannan, 2016; Mizrachi & Sellitto, 2015), and it was important for me to show the owners of the General Store the potential benefits for their business and other local businesses, playing on values they shared with their audience. The business owners around the lake share the same values as their collective audience, but they are a good decade behind the times when it comes to current

marketing trends, so the first portion of this project was persuading the General Store owner to see the benefits of social media marketing from a business perspective.

The store's owner views social media from a consumer's point of view, so he has had an impartial and sometimes negative opinion of these platforms as business tools for a while. However, as a business, social media can be a benefit because of the sheer amount of consumers on these platforms (Baker, 2015; Greenwood, Perrin, & Duggan, 2016; Morello, 2017; Rowett, 2016). This combined with further research leads me to believe marketing tactics should include area and experience/adventure promotion for the store and other local businesses, which means information is the main component for Facebook posts. The store owner agreed to the Facebook page with possibilities of expanding to an Instagram profile and Wix website if there was success with the Facebook page sans discounts, deals, and paid advertising.

Though a majority of research on Facebook shows that there needs to be daily posting with five or more hashtags (Baker, 2015), I decided to ease into daily posting by starting with three posts a week including visuals and hashtags. One post would be a Lake update, another would be a product feature for the store, and the third would draw attention to a local business or event. I chose to do this because a majority of our audience are weekend visitors who still work during the week. I chose this tactic to entice our southern Nevadan audience to the Lake; escape the heat and have a fun, family adventure.

With these challenges established, I set my goals. Since the General Store is in fact a small tourism business and there was no online presence, I decided gaining 1,000 followers by the end of the summer season with a post reach of at least 500 to be a success for the first season of the Facebook presence. I felt as though this goal would push the boundaries of my skillset while still being attainable for the business. If my post reach is more important due to

information distribution, then post engagement through comments, likes, and shares, while still important, should be less than post reach. After researching consumer trends, I found that audiences similar to that of the Panguitch Lake General store would be more likely to read promotional information about the store and the area than react or comment on the posts (Morello, 2017; Rowett, 2016). Therefore, I set goals of 10-15 comments per post and 15-20 reactions (likes, loves, shares, etc.), again trying to push the limits with little base to jump from while staying achievable (Appx. B). This was to my advantage since I was the only one creating and posting content, and this was my first attempt at managing social media marketing for a small business, so I had time to research while I was working through this project. With these goals in mind, I set to work on constructing a Facebook page.

A few (or more) years ago, the owner's son started a Facebook page for the store, but it was a superficial attempt at a social media presence and was soon abandoned. This page had just over 200 likes/followers, but it lacked consistent posts and visuals, so it never gained any true success. Still, I felt Facebook would be a good community forum for our audience, so I set to work to revamp the Facebook page for a modern audience (Appx. B). My hope was that I could gain my first tier audience from store and lake regulars, then as they viewed and shared content, I could reach my second tier by the end of the summer.

Part of reaching these goals was researching and understanding SEO tactics and creating a brand image through this. Panguitch Lake is such a unique name and niche search that our store was already on the first two pages of Google searches pertaining to Panguitch Lake and the General Store, but our Facebook page that was also acting as the official website at the time was not part of the first results. In order to keep our position and striving to push the Facebook page up the ranks, though it wasn't likely any business outside of Garfield County would trump us, I

researched and implemented an SEO plan for each type of post I published. This wouldn't only help with keeping the General Store on the first two pages of the Google search, but effective SEO can help us reach an even broader audience. So I have utilized keywords like "adventure," "fishing," "vacation," "mountain adventures," "summer escapes," "Gone Fishin'," and keywords specific to the business like "Panguitch Lake," "Panguitch Lake Liar's Club," "Panguitch Lake Family," etc., the latter being especially useful during the Brian Head fire (Appx. A). I also incorporated keywords catering to the different posts. With my social media platform established and keyword research done, I was able to move on to incorporating visual elements.

The next step in building a brand image is visuals, specifically business logos and designs that set us apart from the other businesses and pique interest from our audience. I conducted basic research of graphic design and created a logo that could be used on posters throughout the store, graphics for the Facebook page, and even products if the occasion ever called for it (Appx. D). After many drafts of the logo and a uniform design structure for posters and flyers, I settled on a design that captured the essence of the store and could be transposed to the different formats we needed it for (Appx. D).

Finally, because this business functions seasonally for the summer and fall months, I had to determine the amount of communication to be used during the off season. I thought posting two or three times a month would be sufficient to keep brand awareness up during the off season. By doing this, it is likely that the business and the tourism area will act as a forefront idea when families are planning their summer vacations.

Analysis

Even with unexpected challenges along the way, this initial social media marketing strategy for the Panguitch Lake General Store was a success based on the criteria I set up for my methods (Appx. B; Appx. C). The Facebook page surpassed my initial goal of 1,000 to 1,763 page likes and 1,886 page follows as of 2 March 2018, up from 200 likes/followers at the beginning of the 2017 season (Appx. B). Post reach, likes, and comments have followed suit and have also exceeded my initial goals. Post comments have reached a consistent 10 to 30 responses with 30 to 60 post likes and a post reach of 1,000 to 3,000 reads without paid Facebook advertising (Appx. B). I did not expect this natural growth, and with more strategy, it's possible to grow this project more for the coming seasons.

The post reach is especially impressive when I take into consideration the purpose of tourism marketing is to promote and persuade through information. I would have liked greater post interaction, which I will initiate further this season through interaction with the customers (questions, polls, photo sharing, etc.), but the ability to reach an excess of 3,000 post views is a great accomplishment for the General Store and the tourism area as a whole. Though I wish to lay claim on the amount of success achieved over a single season, I was not the only promoter of this page. The tragic Brian Head Fire that ripped through our community through June and July helped me boost the amount of page likes and followers we had overall (Appx. B; Appx. C).

Brian Head Fire

On 17 June, 2017, a seasonal Brian Head resident chose to clean his yard by burning weeds on a high fire warning, high wind day, and the fire soon exceeded his control. Because of the wind speeds and direction, the fire began to quickly climb away from the man's cabin over the top of the mountain toward Brian Head town. In the span of a few days, Brian Head town

was evacuated, and the fire made its way toward Panguitch Lake the back way over extreme terrain that made the fire almost impossible for forest service firefighters to fight.

On 21 June, 2017, the Brian Head fire climbed the Clear Creek ridge (just west of the lake, with hundreds of homes) separating Iron County where Brian Head is located and Garfield County where Panguitch Lake is located. As we watched the fire make its way toward our community, we discovered that there was a miscommunication between the two counties, and though Iron County representatives suggested they initiated an evacuation order earlier in the day, the Garfield County sheriff never received this order. As the store owner worked with local officials to initiate an evacuation order for the west side of the lake to retreat to the east side of the lake and cooperate with BLM firefighters and local volunteer firefighters, I took to Facebook to inform our audience of what was happening, urging locals to make their way to the other side of the lake and informing our travelling audience that their weekend plans must be postponed. Through previous Facebook interaction, we had a small online community at this point, and the first post I published that night about the fire and evacuation order spiked the amount of views and followers our Facebook page had almost overnight. This action justified my claim that information is the driving force for tourism destinations.

Evacuees took shelter at the local LDS church for the night, expecting the fire to veer away from the lake by the morning. This was not the case. The next day, the fire was so close that everyone was ordered to evacuate the lake entirely until further notice. The general population was not allowed to return to the lake for recreational use until 7 July, 2017.

Throughout this experience, I worked in collaboration with the store owner's daughter to keep our audience informed on the damage to the lake, the progress the firefighters were making, and how properties were fairing (Appx. B; Appx. C). Locals were worried about their properties and

damage to the lake, so having this line of communication open eased customer worries with daily updates that were customized to them.

Through these posts, I discovered that our community is strong, and that mattered to our audience more than being sold on a specific product. This confirmed that community is a major factor of the General Store's and Panguitch Lake's brand, therefore confirming its importance with small tourism businesses. With a solid community in place, persuading our audience via social media to visit the lake and the Store for their next vacation was proven to be effective. The fire hurt the business economically, but the Facebook presence strengthened the social base of the Store and the community. Between the middle of June and the Fourth of July, local businesses lost between 30,000 and 100,000 dollars in profits, but being able to let our audience know immediately when they could come back to the lake and what to expect brought business back sooner than if local newspapers were the only information source.

Through this project, I found that using social marketing theory to promote the General Store and the tourism area was an effective and necessary way to consider the audience. Using this theory helped me understand the tourism audience, which enabled me to gain their trust as a representative of the Panguitch Lake General Store and Panguitch Lake community. Taking social marketing theory and applying it to the business was a great base for the beginnings of a social media presence via Facebook.

I wasn't able to post as often during our off season than I would have liked. I wasn't as structured as I thought I would be with gathering visuals and information, so I was only able to post once or twice a month. It was especially hard during the winter since I couldn't make it up to the mountain every weekend due to the weather conditions. However, with the posts that I did publish, we had nearly the same reach and response as posts during the season. Based on these

results, I think that posting more frequently during the off season will benefit the Store's brand in the future, and with my new understanding of social media managing websites, this goal will be reasonable.

Facebook hit our target audience and was an effective tool in building and communicating with our audience. The abilities for our audience to post, comment, and message us was useful in helping our audience feel as though they are a part of our business. This increased audience social media usage, and has built a stronger connection between the store and our audience. Therefore, I have concluded that social media positively impacted the Store's brand and presence as the hub of the Panguitch Lake area.

I believe that through my research and project, small tourism businesses do need to focus on information as a means of promotion rather than simply pushing products to the audience. Small tourism businesses need to push an experience or an adventure to see true results with audience interest and interaction. The success of this project was the key that I needed to expand our social media presence even further through an Instagram and website presence, and I am excited to see how the store will be impacted from there.

Conclusion

Though I considered this project a success, there were many things I could have done and will do this coming season to have a more effective presence on social media, such as being more consistent with my posting, utilizing social media managing programs, adding higher quality visuals, and adding an Instagram and Wix page to our social media plan (Appx. A).

I initially chose to post three times a week, and while this was effective in enticing our audience to make a trip up to the lake based on verbal audience response (Appx. B; Appx. C), posting daily would have a greater reach and reaction, potentially helping business growth over

the next few seasons. Though I understood this through my readings on social media marketing, I needed to fail in order to fully understand the positive effects of posting daily, which is apparently how I learn best with projects like this. In the future, I will not only post daily, but I will post consistently. Our posts after five in the evening did not do as well as posts published between ten in the morning and three or four in the afternoon, based on post reach and reactions, (Appx. B), so I will be aware of the time I need to invest in revamping my social media plan to account for posting times. Using social media managing programs will also help with my consistency, now that I know they exist.

Through all of my research on social media marketing and tourism businesses, I never once thought about researching social media managing programs and how they would help me as the amateur social media manager and the business I was working for. This was a fault that I intend to rectify this coming season with the Facebook page and Instagram profile I will construct this spring. With the social media managing tool, I will be able to publish a steady flow of quality content without extensive stress. I can also use this tool to manage responses and exposure across the platforms. Again, this will help me be consistent with content quality, and another skill that will help me with this is understanding the basics of photography to add stronger visuals to the social media platforms, showcasing the beauty and intrigue of the area.

Finally, to ensure greater success to the store, I will implement an Instagram profile and a plug and play Wix page to promote further information and visuals that will strengthen our brand and enforce community standards. I will take the research I conducted for this project and apply it to these new platforms and work to gain further success for the next step of the social media plan. Based on this project, I expect to see success with the updated social media plan.

This experiential project was a wonderful opportunity to familiarize myself with a newly prominent form of communication that is apparent across every professional field. I am excited to take this information and add it to my communication toolkit for my professional career aspects and further help the Panguitch Lake General Store this coming season.

\

References

- Ashley, C. & Tuten, T. (2015). Creative strategies in social media marketing: An exploratory study of branded social content and consumer engagement. *Psychology & Marketing*, 32(1), 15-27.
- Beese, J. (2015). How to use social media for small business. *Sprout Social*. Retrieved from, <http://sproutsocial.com/insights/social-media-for-small-business/>
- Baker, D. M. (2015). The marketer's guide to Facebook. *Contently*.
- Boling, R., Burns, M., & Dick, G. (2014). Social networking and small business: An exploratory study. *Contemporary Readings in Law & Social Justice*, 6(2), 122-129.
- Brown, D., Spillman, K., Lee, M., & Lu, Y. (2014). Factors influencing small tourism business performance: The case of central Kentucky, United States. *Journal of Hospitality, Marketing & Management*, 23(7), 768-789.
- Greenwood, S., Perrin, A., & Duggan, M. (2016). Social media update 2016: Facebook usage and engagement is on the rise, while adoption of other platforms holds steady. *Pew Research*. Retrieved from <http://www.pewinternet.org/2016/11/11/social-media-update-2016/>
- Hernandez, B. A. (2010). Is your company really a small business? *Business News Daily*. Retrieved from, <https://www.businessnewsdaily.com/295-sba-size-standards-small-business.html>
- Koens, K. & Thomas, R. (2015). Is small beautiful? Understanding the contribution of small business in township tourism to economic development. *Development Southern Africa*, 32(3), 320-332.

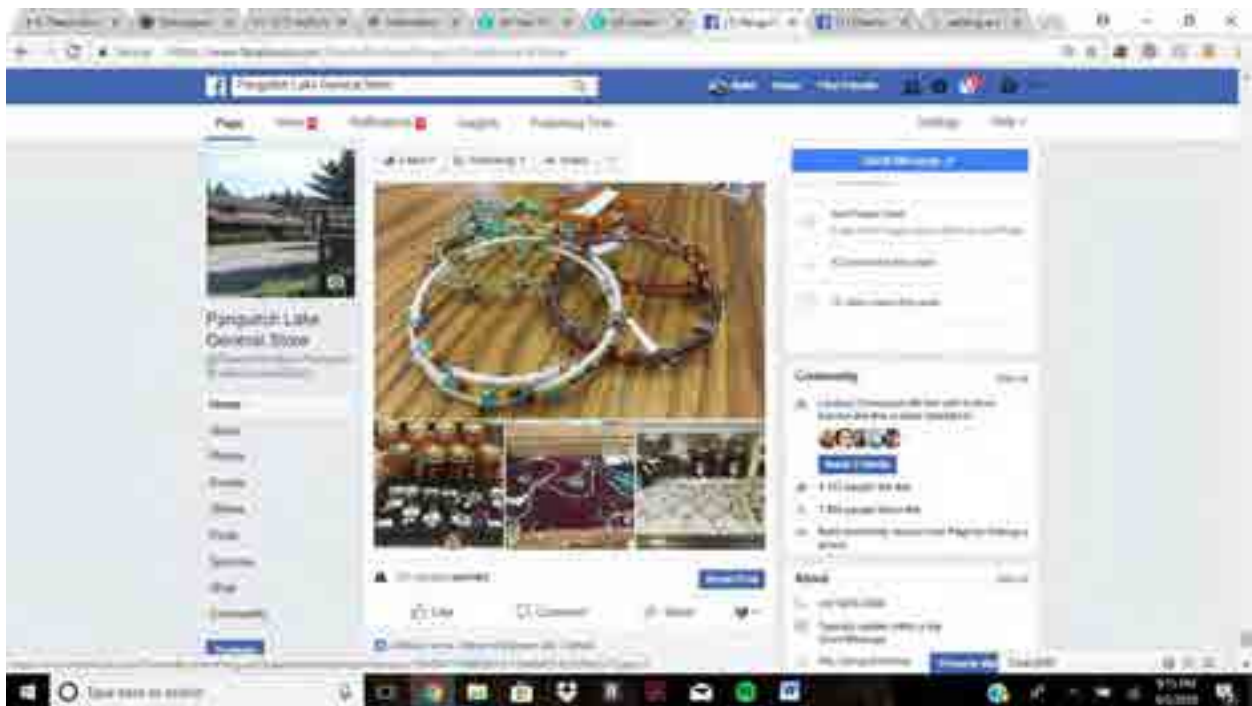
- Kolter, P. & Zaltman, G. (1971). Social marketing: An approach to planned social change. *Journal of Marketing*, 35(3), 3-12.
- Kumar, A., Bezawada, R., Rishika, R., Jankiraman, R., & Kannan, P.K. (2016). From social to sale: The efficacies of firm-generated content in social media on customer behavior. *Journal of Marketing*, 80(1), 7-25.
- Mizrachi, I. & Sellitto, C. (2015). Building a Facebook strategy: Some insights from Australian accommodation small tourism enterprises (STEs). *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism*, 16(1), 63-79.
- Morello, R. (2017). Tourism promotion and marketing. *Chron*. Retrieved from, <http://smallbusiness.chron.com/tourism-promotion-marketing-57157.html>.
- Nobre, H. & Silva, D. (2014). Social networking marketing strategy and SME strategy benefits. *Journal of Transnational Management*, 19(2), 138-151.
- Rowett, P. (2016). Ideal customer profiling: The process of identifying your most profitable prospects. *Tourism eSchool*. Retrieved from, <https://tourismeschool.com/ideal-customer-profile-persona/>
- SelectUSA (2017). Travel, tourism, & hospitality spotlight. Retrieved from, <https://www.selectusa.gov/travel-tourism-and-hospitality-industry-united-states>
- The 10 best Facebook ad campaigns that killed it in 2017. (2017). *AdEspresso by Hootsuite*. Retrieved from, <https://adespresso.com/blog/best-facebook-ad-campaigns/>
- Torlak, G. N. (2005). Effective management of marketing strategies in small firms. *Journal of Academic Studies*, 6(24), 41-56.

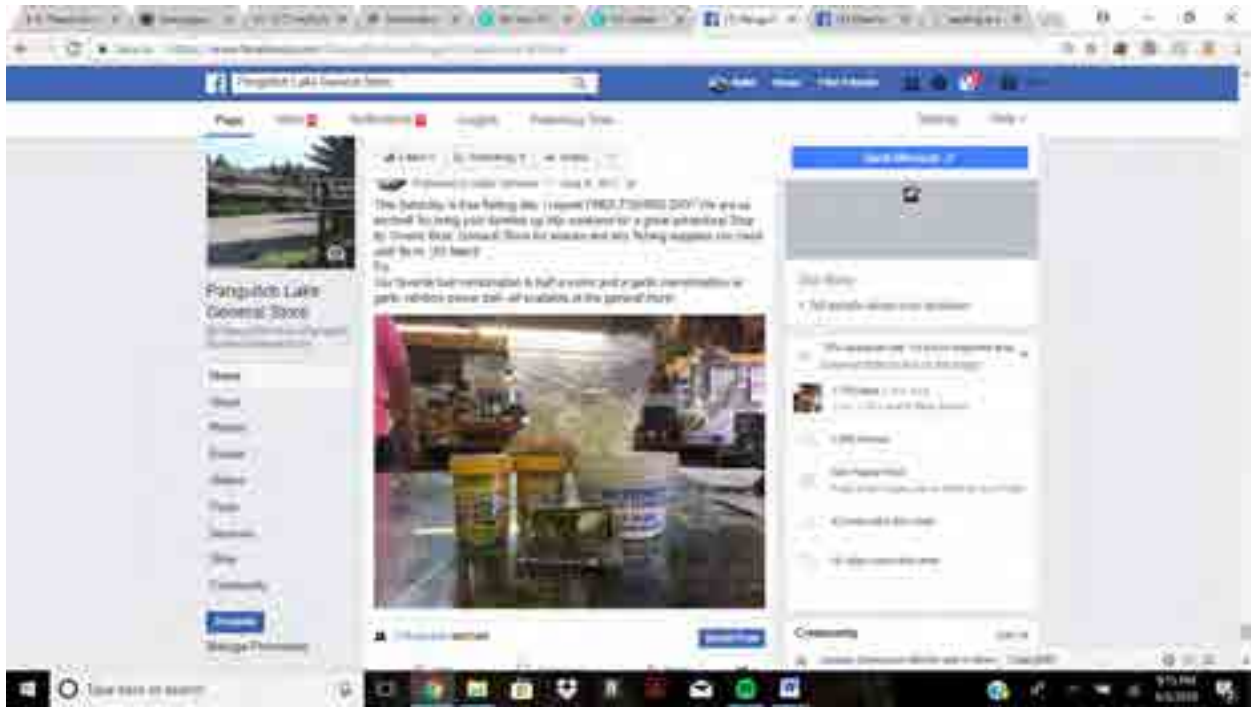
Appendix A: Social Media Plan

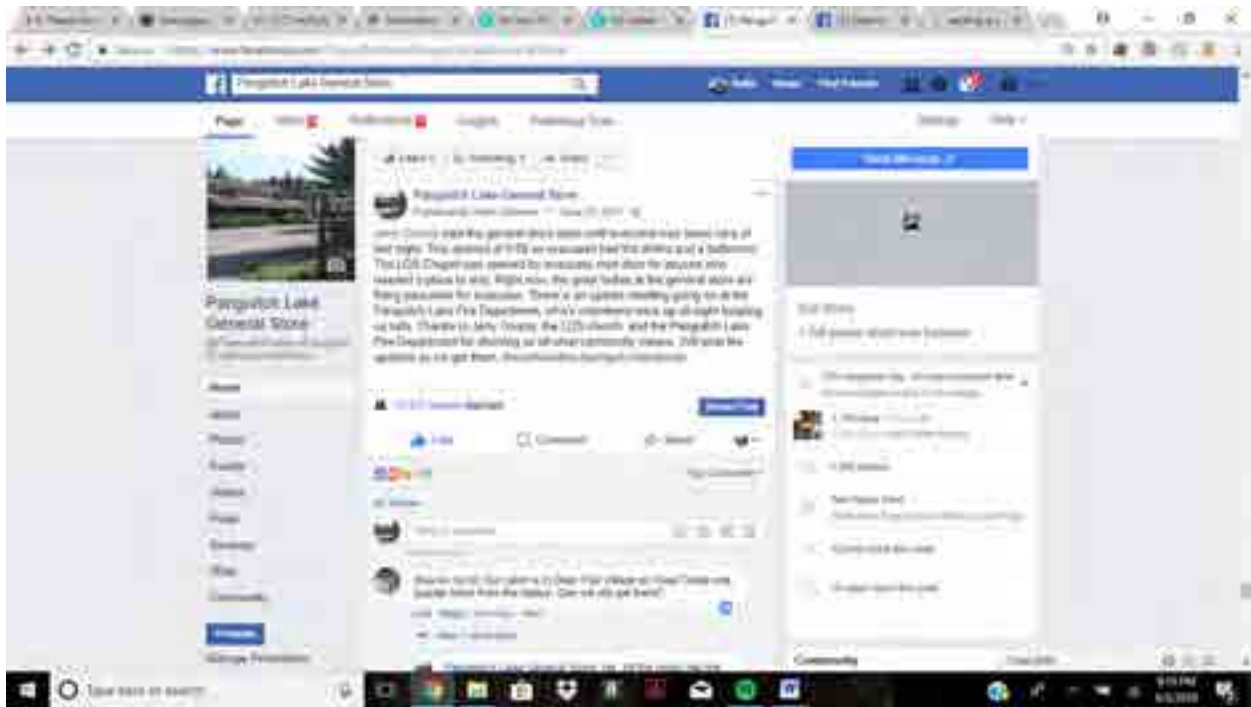
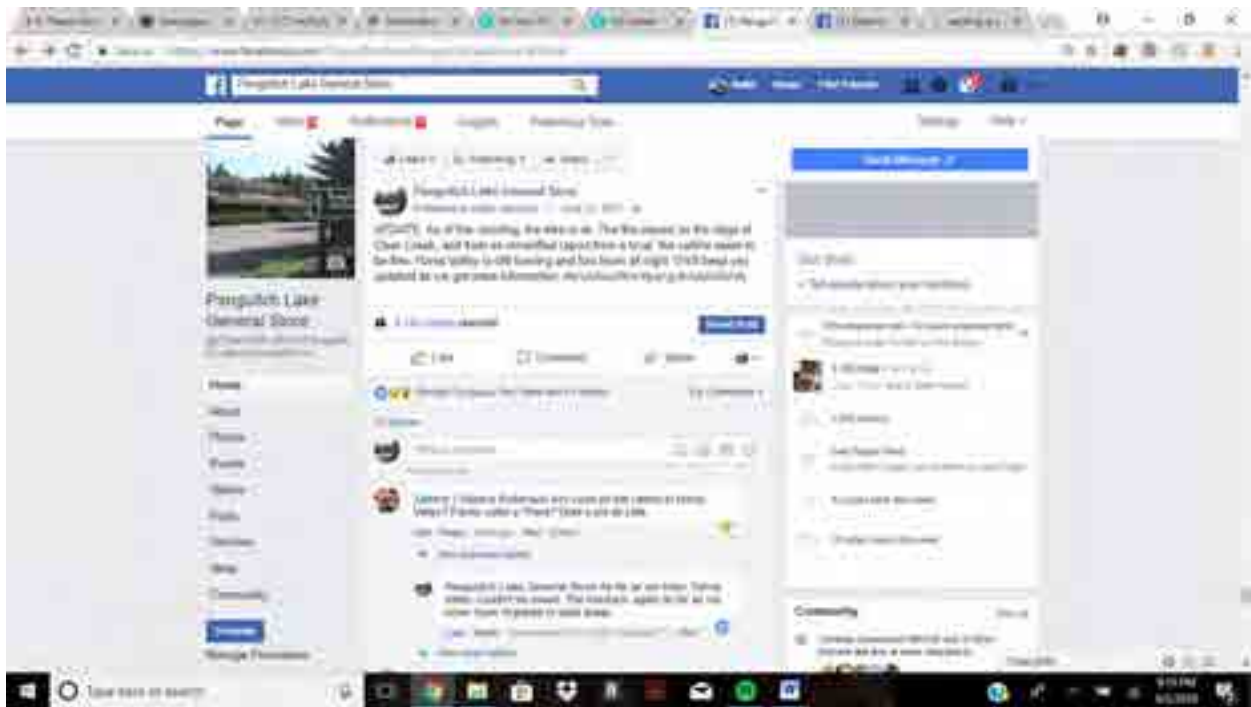
Appendix B: Selected Facebook Posts

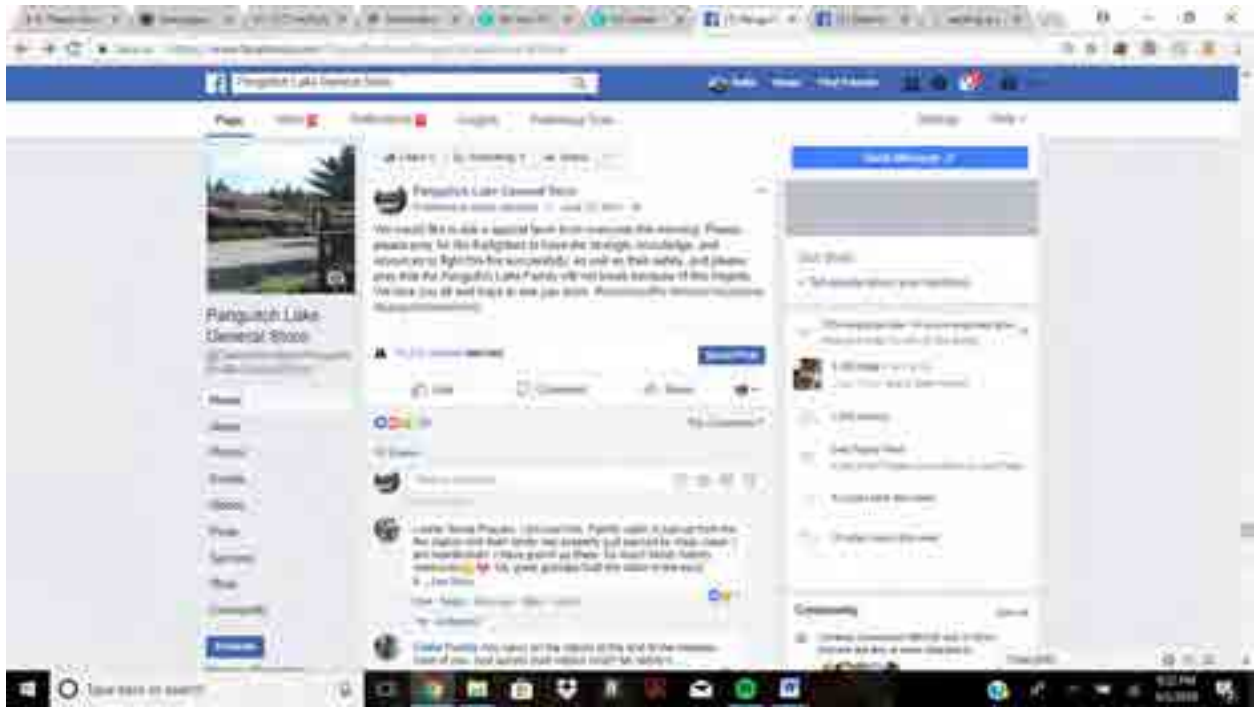
These Facebook posts illustrate the growth we saw with the Facebook page from its first post to posts closer to the end of the season. Through these posts, we can see that growth was steady until the fire, and page likes and follows had a boost. This proves my idea that information is more important than product promotion when it comes to small tourism businesses. We need to sell an experience and an area rather than individual products.

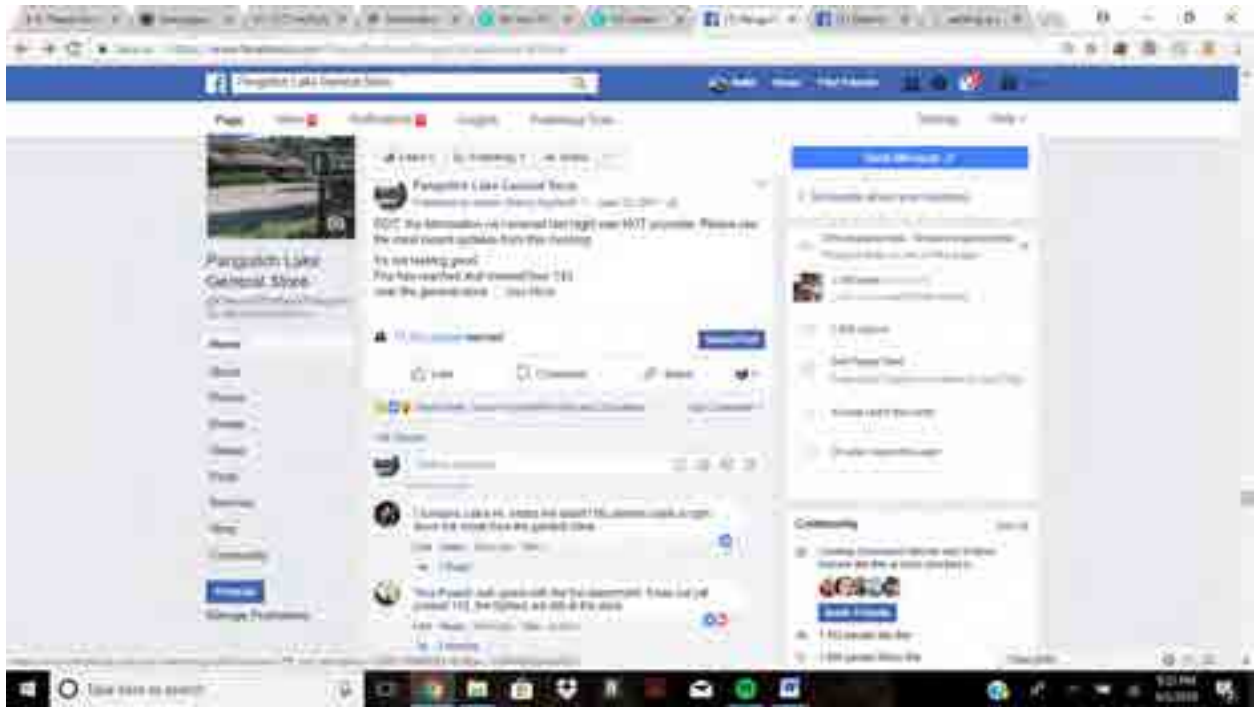
Through these Facebook posts, we can see that our loyal clientele will view our posts and are interested in the Panguitch Lake area even during the off season, and because of this, I will continue to post during the winter and spring to keep our audience interested.

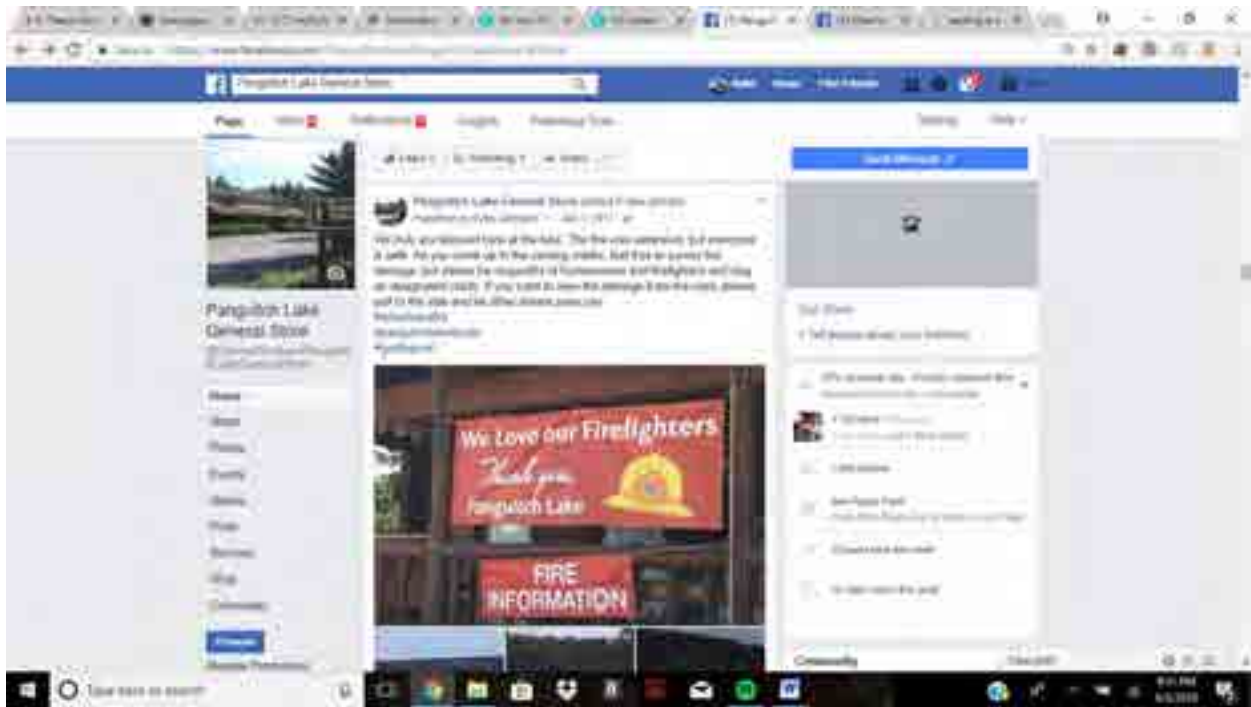
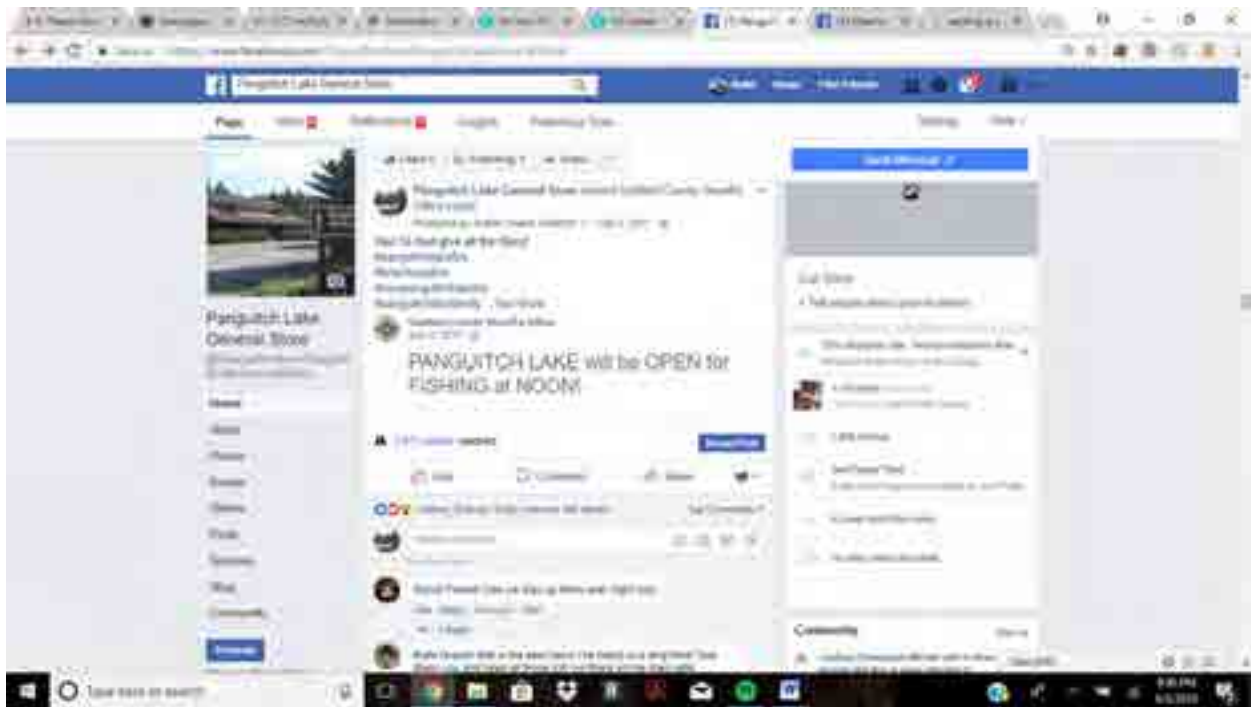


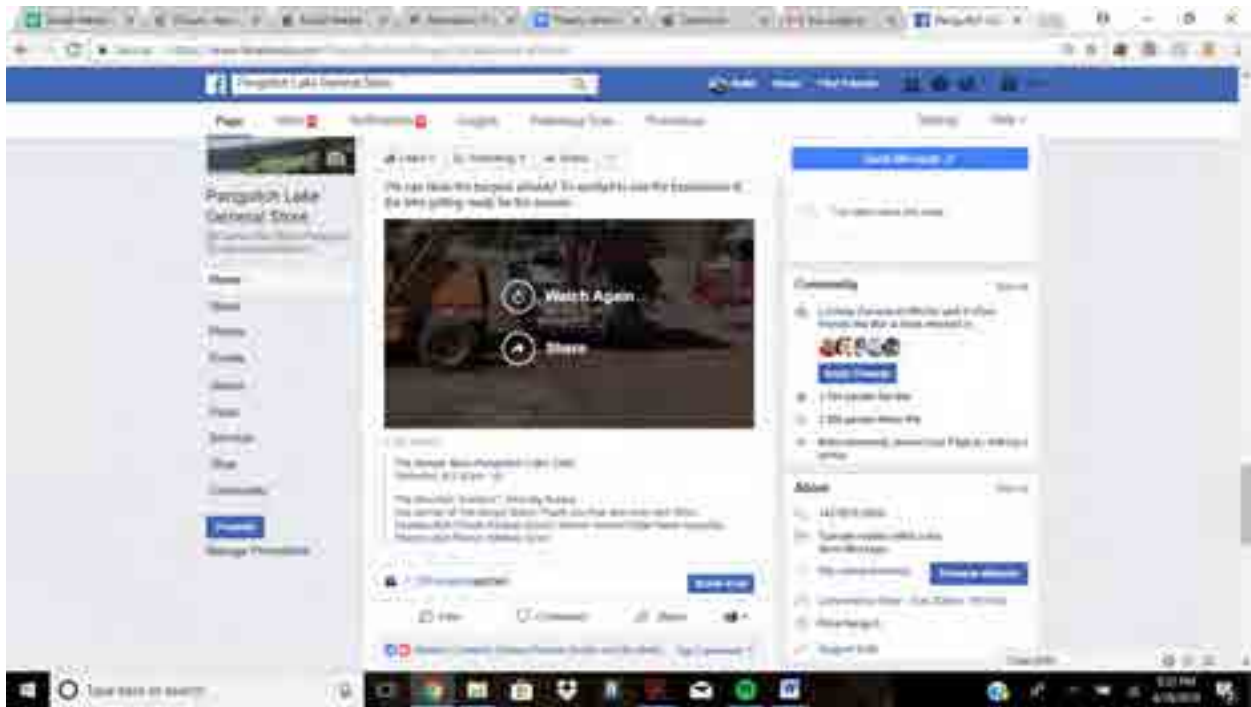












Appendix C: Selected Journal Entries

7 June 2017

After showing Jerry Owens the social media plan that I created, he has agreed to let me conduct this project on the Panguitch Lake General Store. If there is success with this project based on the criterion I implemented in the social media plan, then I will expand to include an Instagram profile and a simple Wix website.

16 June 2017

Our Facebook page has been active for almost ten days now, and we have grown to over 400 page likes and followers; 200 more than before becoming active again. If we stay on track, we should reach our 1,000 page like/follower by the end of the summer. If this is the case, we will for sure expand to Instagram and Wix.

17 June 2017

A fire has started in Brian Head and is growing fast. I have been able to use the Facebook page to communicate the updates with our audience. We're still seeing steady growth, so I am excited to see the results at the end of the summer season.

21 June 2017

Still growing steadily.

The Brian Head fire has eaten thousands of acres over rough terrain, so BLM firefighters have not been able to contain the blaze. As of six this evening, we can see the fire across the lake on Clear Creek ridge. The residents are wondering about evacuation orders, but as of yet nothing has been said. Still, we feel an evacuation coming.....

Evacuation order for the west side of the lake. After I grabbed necessities, I went back to the store and posted an update on Facebook. By the end of the night we have had over 12,000

post views. We'll stay at the LDS church tonight with other evacuees and hear updates in the morning.

22 June 2017

As of this morning, 13 cabins have been destroyed with multiple outbuildings and trailers, totaling 42 buildings burned between Brian Head and Panguitch Lake. I took to Facebook to update our audience in a way that was informative without panicking the audience.

Overnight, the fire grew to the point the entire lake is being evacuated. I used Facebook to update our audience and show them what I could of the lake as everyone packed and left.

01 July 2017

The lake is still evacuated, and as I promote information about the fire and surrounding area, we are getting more and more page likes and followers. The first post about the fire I published a week ago, and it has reached almost 20,000 views.

Hundreds of people are wondering when they can come back to the lake, but right now it doesn't look like any time soon. It looks like we won't be open for the Fourth of July weekend, which means we're looking at about a \$30,000 loss in three days. I'll let our audience know as soon as I can when they will be able to come back.

04 July 2017

We're allowed back for 30 minute escorted trip to the cabins to clean out any food and get any necessities we left behind. There's no room for tourism yet, but the resorts on the east side of the lake are getting ready to reopen.

14 July 2017

We've been back for about a week now, and tourism is picking back up. It's not nearly where it was last season at this time, but without the Facebook page allowing me to

communicate with our audience, not many people would know that we're up and running again based on what customers have told me as I check them out at the register. We have received countless expressions of gratitude for our Facebook updates (sincerely, we tallied well over 350 before stopping the count). None of the other websites, even the Garfield County website, announced the lake reopening, so we had a wide reach with this information. We have about 1,500 page likes and followers, and our initial post about the fire has reached over 24,000 views.

With the growth of our Facebook page, our other posts are reaching a broader audience; over 1,000 views per post now.

12 Aug. 2017

We have reached our goals for the Facebook page, so for the next summer season, I will implement an Instagram profile and Wix website to gain a broader audience and provide more information about the lake. I am proud of the success we've had over this summer, and I'm excited to see what we can do for the next summer season.

Appendix D: Visuals

As part of the branding portion of this project, I created logos that could be used on business documents, advertising fliers, and posters within the store. The following logo designs were approved by Jeannie Owens and have been used throughout the store and online.



Appendix E: Consent

On June 5, 2017, Jerry Owens verbally agreed to let Kaitlin Johnston enact a social media plan for the Panguitch Lake General Store as long as the store's values were kept intact and the project didn't cause strife with any of the family members. After these steps were met, the project could begin. On June 7, 2017, the project began.