SOCIAL MEDIA USES BY STUDENTS

IN AN AGRICULTURAL STUDENT

ORIENTATION COURSE

By

CODY CRAMER

Bachelor of Science in Agribusiness

Oklahoma State University

Stillwater, Oklahoma

2011

SOCIAL MEDIA USES BY STUDENTS

IN AN AGRICULTURAL STUDENT

ORIENTATION COURSE

Thesis Approved:

Dr. Shelly Peper Sitton
_____
Thesis Adviser

Dr. Steve Damron
_____

Dr. Traci L. Naile
_____

Name: CODY CRAMER

Date of Degree: MAY, 2013

Title of Study: SOCIAL MEDIA USES BY STUDENTS IN AN AGRICULTURAL
STUDENT ORIENTATION COURSE

Major Field: AGRICULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS

Abstract: With discussion in popular press and research literature about social media's value and its uses, the researchers sought to examine the perceptions of students enrolled in an agricultural orientation course concerning their use of communications channels for information from their college. The college provides an assortment of academic, professional, and personal services information through multiple communications channels. Guided by the uses and gratifications theory, the researchers collected students' perceptions of the usefulness of these communications channels, including social media platforms Facebook, Google+, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest, LinkedIn, and Foursquare. Various entities within the university use these social media platforms to share information with students. Data was collected via an online Qualtrics instrument in August 2012. Respondents ranged from 18 to 43 years old, and before college, the majority lived in a town with a population of 10,000 or more people. The data illustrate what channels students use and how they use them, specifically as they look for information about college and university programs or services. The respondents indicated they use email for college information most often, but they use Facebook as their primary social media platform, mainly to interact with friends and family. They indicated the college's Facebook page was useful. The researchers recommend agricultural colleges use email and Facebook as their primary methods to reach undergraduate students about scholarships, available jobs, and internships, but continue to monitor changes in students' media preferences.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background and Setting

With 93% of 12- to 19-year-olds using the Internet, a teen is more likely to be exposed to college and university material than ever before; of those teenagers connected to the Internet, 73% use social media sites on a daily basis (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010). Approximately 99% of college students today have exposure to a computer as well as other technology prior to entering college (Hostetler & Deeter, 2012). Once enrolled, college students use the Internet for educational as well as social purposes (Jones, 2002). These students use communication methods for social purposes on a daily basis (Rhoades, Irani, Telg, & Myers, 2008), and Jones (2002) found college students use the Internet to communicate with friends 72% of the time they spend browsing. According to a study at Michigan State University, students spend 16.2 hours a week on socializing and relaxing in college, significant because they spend more time socializing and relaxing than on academic endeavors (Krishna, Suvedi, & Eunice, 2011). However, understanding the importance of the Internet and new communication technology can be difficult for faculty to value because many professors did not grow up with the Internet as a classroom resource (Rhoades et al., 2008).

By having endless access to the Internet, current and prospective students can view college and universities sites frequently; and because of this increased viewing, colleges and universities are adding more tools to focus on this technologically savvy student (Wandel, 2008). Social media has allowed colleges and universities to connect with students at faster speeds with earlier interaction than in the past (DeAndrea, Ellison, LaRose, Steinfield, & Fiore, 2012). The group of students now entering college was born with technology and has used technology as a part of everyday life (Martinez & Wartman, 2009). While many adults are learning about technology, including social media platforms through this younger generation (Watkins, 2009), current students use communication technologies, like social media, to maintain peer-to-peer communication (Constantinides & Zinck Stagno, 2011). According to Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, and Gonyea (2008), when students are mandated to take part in extracurricular activities, they are more likely to continue with their education. In addition, using technology outside of the classroom helps students learn and perform better in the classroom because the use of social media provides the opportunity for students to learn at a faster pace, which is more relatable to a fast-pace society (Rhoades et al., 2008). In fact, 93% of college students believe the knowledge of computer skills is important for their futures after college (Hostetler et al., 2012).

Social media includes a wide variety of technologies and provides benefits to any group looking to market itself, including universities (Constantinides et al., 2011). College administrations are knowledgeable of students' use of social media platforms, according to Wandel (2008). This researcher indicated 97% of college administrations use Facebook and other social media sites while 83% of university administrations

indicated they use social media sites specifically to post information about upcoming events or organizational activities. Therefore, social media platforms are more important now than ever (Wandel, 2008). Social media platforms provide ways for higher education institutions to market their services (Constantinides et al., 2011) as well as to highlight student connections that can break barriers and encourage communication (DeAndrea et al., 2012). This connection allows prospective students to make more informed decisions about choosing which university to attend (Constantinides et al., 2011).

According to Hoppe (2009), students learn through social media by engaging and interacting, but this technology should not get in the way of the learning process. The amount of technological interaction in educational activities positively affects the grades and retention of freshman students; additionally, a university's faculty, staff, and administration should teach the values of the university at the earliest opportunity to see positive results in grades and retention (Kuh et al., 2008; Lotkowski, Robbins, & Noeth, 2004). Interaction and learning should continue throughout students' college experiences (Kuh et al., 2008). Early communication from the college provides students with information as well as with help transitioning into the college lifestyle, reducing the initial anxiety students may feel while preparing to start classes (DeAndrea et al., 2012; Wandel, 2008). Interaction from peers and administrators must continue once students are in college (Wandel, 2008). Students show a higher grade point average and have a greater retention rate when they are socially connected and this connection must be made within days of students arriving on campus (Allen, Robbins, Casillas, & Oh, 2008).

Higher education institutions should maintain a good relationship with current students, faculty and staff, and alumni (Constantinides et al., 2011). While in college,

students look for support and ways to feel connected, relying on their peers for support for academic concerns, such as a completing an assignment, which is also known as an informational support need (Thompson & Mazer, 2009; Wandel, 2008). Also, according to Thompson and Mazer (2009), students require additional academic support to explain specific problems in motivation and informational support in college. Support is most important during the transition period from high school to college as first-year college students commonly find they need different types of support, not only from professors and faculty but also from their fellow students (Thompson et al., 2009).

Oklahoma State University (OSU) as well as the OSU College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (CASNR) use various social media platforms to engage current and prospective students ("Socially Orange," 2013). Through a review of literature, the researcher was unable to find research encompassing the social media platforms in use by OSU.

Statement of the Problem

Although the OSU CASNR has used three social media outlets for more than four years, no formal research has been conducted concerning the usage of the outlets by students. Therefore, formal research of social media use of CASNR students in the AG 1011 course is needed to assist those administering CASNR social media efforts.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe the students in AG 1011 orientation course concerning the OSU and CASNR social media platforms as educational and occupational resources.

Objectives

The objectives of this study were to:

1. Describe selected personal and academic characteristics of students enrolled in AG 1011;

2. Describe the self-reported communications channels used by students enrolled in AG 1011;

3. Describe the self-reported social media use of students enrolled in AG 1011; and

4. Describe the usefulness of CASNR social media outlets as perceived by students enrolled in AG 1011.

Scope

Data collection was limited to students enrolled in the AG 1011 orientation course in the fall semester of 2012 when the instrument was distributed.

Significance

The study is being conducted by the researcher to provide feedback for the CASNR Student Success Center at Oklahoma State University. The CASNR Student Success Center is home to the prospective student coordinator and two student development coordinators; the office provides career services; coordinates the CASNR Freshmen in Transition program, CASNR ambassadors, Career Liaisons, and residential hall student mentors; and serves as a main hub of activity for the college (Amy Gazaway, personal communication, March 12, 2013).

Limitations

The following limitations were taken into consideration regarding this study:

1. Data collection was limited due to use of an electronically administered instrument distributed using the OSU-assigned email, which students may or may not use on a regular basis.

2. The instrument was available for limited amounts of time via Qualtrics.com. The instrument was distributed August 31, 2012, through September 9, 2012.

3. Some of the participants unaware of all social media platforms included in the study.

4. The results of this study cannot be generalized beyond the selected population.

5. The researcher chose to use respondents 18 years of age and older.

6. The study investigated only social media platforms, not radio, TV, other computer programs or the Internet overall.

7. The study was limited because all aspects of an individual's situation could not be considered. These aspects should be considered before understanding the uses and gratifications in that scenario (Vincent et al., 2009).

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made throughout this study:

1. All respondents used their assigned OSU email address.

2. Respondents were honest regarding their perceptions of social media platforms.

3. Respondents were honest regarding usage of OSU and CASNR social media platforms.

4. The usefulness of currently used social media platforms could be measured with a survey instrument.

Definitions

The following list of definitions was used to guide this study:

Apps – The word app is short for application and is primarily software used on a phone (Campbell, 2011).

Digital Immigrant – An individual or group of people born before digital technology (Sullivan, 2011).

Digital Native – An individual who has used technology, such as computers, video games, and the Internet, throughout their learning experiences (Prensky, 2001).

Freshman – a student with fewer than 28 semester credit hours completed successfully (OSU, 2012).

Friend (noun) – To be a part of the user's social network or Friend List (Martinez et al., 2009).

Friend (verb) – To extend the invitation to be a part of a user's social network; to accept the invitation to be on a Friend List (Martinez et al., 2009).

Group – A Facebook application that allows a collection of Facebook users to form an affinity network of users specific to information (Martinez et al., 2009).

LASSO Student – A student who is assigned to the Learning and Student Success Opportunities Center, which will assist him or her academically prior to his or her admission to one of OSU's six undergraduate colleges ("Academic Review Committee," 2013).

Message – A private text communication that can be sent to any Facebook member even if not on a user's Friend List or the user's network (Martinez et al., 2009).

Millennials – Individuals born between 1981 and 2000 (Wandel, 2009).

News Feed – Automatic updates of friends' activities that appear on the profile page and user inbox. Users can customize but not opt-out of feed (Martinez et al., 2009).

Poke – An online Facebook prod or nudge of another user to signal a desire to communicate (Martinez et al., 2009).

Social Media Platforms – Methods of communication to share items quickly to people with whom an individual associates; tools used to engage through businesses, organizations, or groups in a variety of ways (Agresta & Bough, 2011).

Tag – A way of associating a person with a photograph posted on Facebook. The names of the persons in the photograph appear over the online image. To get rid of the association or the "tag," users can "untag" or "detag" themselves so their names no longer appear on the images (Martinez et al., p. 136-137, 2009).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This section is a review of appropriate literature, which is a precursor and framework for the presented study. Topics include social media platforms, uses of social media platforms, and an indication of the theoretical framework, including the uses and gratifications theory.

Social Media Platforms

In the age of digital networks, students use social media platforms as social devices to communicate and to facilitate communication (Joosten, 2012; Martinez et al., 2009). Agresta and Bough (2011) described social media as simply a method of communication, while Joosten (2012) said social media is an online way "everybody and anybody can share anything, anywhere, anytime" (p. 6). The key goal of social media communication is sharing items with people with whom an individual associates quickly (Agresta & Bough, 2011). Junco, Heibergert and Loken (2011) defined social media as "a collection of Internet websites, services and practices that support collaboration, community building, participation, and sharing" (p. 119).

Social media connects others in a simple and easy way so the user can fulfill

his or her relationship (Agresta et al., 2011, p. 3). Currently, 82% of online teens between the ages of 14 and 17 use social media platforms and 62% visit these sites daily (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010). Sharing personal thoughts and stories, as through social media platforms, creates a sense of familiarity as sharing these personal qualities facilitates the need to create an online identity (Booth, 2010; Watkins, 2009).). Even smaller, not-so-popular social media platforms are growing (Joosten, 2012). In regard to social media platforms, "these tools may have the potential to reshape communication patterns among their users by enabling online communication and lowering the barriers of face-to-face interaction" (DeAndrea, Ellison, LaRose, Steinfield & Fiore, 2012, p. 15). Although at the dawn of the 21st century, email was the primary source for teacher and student to communicate, instant messaging and social media platforms have quickly evolved to the primary source of communication (Watkins, 2009).

Multiple variations of social media platforms are used to identify and connect with individuals (Martinez et al., 2009). These platforms include social networking; social bookmarking; microblogging, video, image and audio sharing; and virtual worlds (Joosten, 2012). According to Booth (2012), everyone is a fan of something, and social media platforms allow people to share the "fandom" and, as a result, communicate about the "fandom" (p. 44). Facebook, the most commonly used social media platform, is the most globally accepted and easy-to-use (Duggan & Brenner, 2013; McCarthy, 2010).

College students want to use various types of social media platforms because they are easy, fast, and require little effort to communicate; communicating via social media platforms is simple because it is reading and writing (Joosten, 2012). Today's college students are familiar with MySpace, YouTube, podcasts, Bebo, Facebook, Flickr, and

Apple's iPod or iPhone, all of which are communication devices or versions of a social

media platform (Martinez et al., 2009). Although Facebook is the most popular site,

MySpace and LinkedIn also are used by young adults between 18 and 29 years old

(Lenhart et al., 2010). Of this age group, 71% have Facebook; 66% have MySpace; and

7% have a LinkedIn account (Lenhart et al., 2010). The number of Twitter users has

doubled since 2010, and users 18 to 29 years of age are most likely to use Twitter

(Duggan & Brenner, 2013). Additionally, Pinterest has attracted five times the number of

women as men, with 15% of Internet users having a Pinterest account (Duggan &

Brenner, 2013).

By using social media personally and professionally, students and instructors have

a sense of familiarity and could be more likely to use it academically, although few

instructors use social media platforms in their classrooms (Joosten, 2012). According to

Hoppe (2009), technology in the classroom can be effective for learning and

teacher/student interaction; however, the instructor must remember to not let this usage

disturb the traditional day-to-day classroom functions. From administrators and faculty to

students, a variety of social media platforms allow communication to occur freely

because social media allows a user to update information about himself or herself to gain

more respect and friendships through these online networks (Joosten, 2012).

Facebook

Today, Facebook is the most-used social media platform by college students and

is the most effective tool at communicating actively with these students (Broome, Croke,

Staton, & Zachritz, 2012). When Facebook began, it was exclusively for college students

(Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009). Facebook was launched in February 2004 and

soon replaced simple text messaging (Martinez et al., 2009). According to Martinez et al. (2009), who defined Facebook as "an online social networking site to engage and participate" (p. 135). According to McCarthy (2010), 80% of students want to learn more about their peers and stay in touch with their close friends. Facebook is used the most to do this and "more individuals were visiting Facebook on the Web than any other site" (Joosten, p. xii, 2012). The mission of Facebook is to "give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected" ("Mission," Facebook, 2004). Facebook is a place where students "already live," making it the most popular site tool within society for students and institutions to connect (Joosten, 2012, p. 4).

Facebook allows for numerous communication methods: uploading photos, sharing links or videos, and providing information to help others learn more about the person posting the information (Facebook, 2004). According to Pempek et al. (2009), Facebook is used an average of 27 minutes per day by college students. "Facebook provides colleges with a simple way to engage students with informal conversations, build community, and easily view prospective students' public activities and interests for recruitment and admissions efforts" (Broome, Croke, Staton & Zachritz, 2012, p. 4). The site features ways to "Friend," "Message," "Poke," "Post," and "Tag" via individual "News Feed" or within a "Group" (Martinez et al., 2009). Students use Facebook 84% of the time to communicate with their friends through these features primarily between 9 p.m. and midnight (Pempek et al., 2009).

According to Pempek et al. (2009), students like using Facebook because they can sustain friendships through this platform. Having the variety of features allows students

to stay informed, communicate, and interact through messages, wall posts, and even events (Pempek et al., 2009).

Foursquare

The free Foursquare application provides a way for friends to share places they visit (Kiss, 2010). Users also may share recommendations or things to do while at places with friends (Foursquare, 20013). Foursquare began in 2009 by two friends and has grown to 25 million users worldwide as of September 2012 (Foursquare, 2013). Foursquare has grown to be a place about encouraging adventure among anyone anywhere (Kiss, 2010). You can "check in" at places to receive discounts or special offers and to share them with your friends (Foursquare, 2009). Users earn badges by checking in at places and sharing the check-in with their friends (Agresta et al., 2011). This form of communication helps companies market themselves by providing incentives to those who visit the establishments and providing "on-the-ground" activities for customers to connect with others (Agresta et al., 2011; Kiesow, 2010).

Google+

Google+ is a social networking site that allows a person to connect with others through circles, hangouts, huddles, and sparks (Karch, 2013). These tools allow for an individual to connect with groups of people, find or discover news or important Web-generated topics, and video chatting with up to nine people (Karch, 2013). In fact, Google+ was not fully ready when it was launched in June 2011 (Beld, 2012). Google+ mixes the social needs of its customers with their search and informational needs, users are Google+ search engine users who want to add a social part to that searching (Beld, 2012). According to the about section in the Google+ features page, the website allows

one to share everything about oneself with others across the globe (Google, 2013). Since

everything is loaded through Google, one can find images, maps, games, friends, and

more at a faster speed (Google, 2013).

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is most useful when looking for a job (Sreenivasan, 2006). LinkedIn is a

network of over 200 million individuals connected with each other for the purpose of

developing and maintaining professional relationships (LinkedIn, 2003). Once

connections have been made, LinkedIn allows one to see "second-degree" and then

"third-degree" connections, which are basically friends of friends (Sreenivasan, 2006).

"LinkedIn connects you to your trusted contacts and helps you exchange knowledge,

ideas, and opportunities with a broader network of professionals" ("*What is LinkedIn?*",

LinkedIn, 2003). After creating a free account, one can make connections through email

contacts (Sreenivasan, 2006). These connections become "first-degree" connections and

part of the network created (Sreenivasan, 2006).

Pinterest

Pinterest is described as a set of boards where photos can be shared or "pinned"

(Pinterest, 2011). These boards can include "pins" of recipes, decorations, toys, gifts, or

any form of idea or quotation by which an individual is inspired (Pinterest, 2011). News

organizations should take advantage and post things to feature stories they have published

(Tenore, 2012). Once an individual has joined, he or she can friend or view other

individuals' boards to view their "pins" (Pinterest, 2011). Although, Pinterest has made

an effort to let any website opt-out of sharing its items for copyright purposes, many

companies like to use Pinterest with their items because it increases traffic to their

website, Google searches, and increases Facebook traffic (Sonderman, 2012). According to the mission of Pinterest, "Pinterest is connecting people all over the world based on shared tastes and interests" ("Our Mission," 2011). From a news standpoint, Pinterest can be most useful as a way to showcase old stories or news and spark new interest from fellow users (Tenore, 2012).

SCVNGR (Scavenger)

An individual uses this application to go on scavenger hunts to earn incentives from an organization (SCVNGR, 2008). This application is a "Google-funded geo-location mobile gaming platform" (Oklahoma State University, 2011). SCVNGR is similar to Foursquare because one must go to specific places and check in (SCVNGR, 2008). When an individual goes to different places, he or she completes tasks or challenges to earn points (SCVNGR, 2008). An organization uses SCVNGR as a marketing strategy to encourage an individual to learn more about it (SCVNGR, 2008). Businesses can have new ways to connect with shoppers by creating challenges and rewards for those challenges via SCVNGR and Facebook (Kiesow, 2010). For instance, in 2011, the Oklahoma State University Alumni Association created a SCVNGR on campus for homecoming festivities (Carter, 2011). The event was the first at a university in Oklahoma and had more than 300 people participate (Carter, 2011). "SCVNGR will be used for other initiatives at OSU including Research Week, New Student Orientation, campus tours, athletic events and more" (Carter, 2011). SCVNGR has partnered with higher education institutions since 2008 (Shutt, 2011).

Twitter

According to Twitter (2006), this social media platform allows a constant update of information such as ideas, opinions, stories, or news. Watkins (2009) defines Twitter as "the microblogging service that allows users to follow each other throughout the day" (p. 56). However, users of Twitter should be respectful and responsive to fully engage with their audiences and should assume anything sent via Twitter is public (Fincham, 2012). Applications for most smart-phones to allow easy accessibility to Twitter while on-the-go (Twitter, 2006).

In 2010, according to Lenhart et al., 8% of teens from 12-to 17-years-of-age had a Twitter account. A "tweet" answers the question, "What are you doing now?" in 140 characters or fewer as a status or message to ones followers (Watkins, 2009). However, Fincham (2012) recommends professors emphasizing to students that Twitter is a permanent record and tweets should be shorter than 140 characters to allow others to retweet. According to Junco, Heibergert, and Loken (2011), Twitter has allowed first-year students to develop relationships across diverse groups.

YouTube

According to the YouTube website (2013), the company began to allow individuals to post videos. The company was established February 15, 2005, but the first video was not posted until April 2005 (Shedden, 2011). YouTube allows anyone with Internet access to post and view video content (YouTube, 2005). According to Shedden (2011), Jupitermedia Corporation released a study that 33% of Internet users ages 18 to 34 find their news online and look to use sites such as YouTube. "YouTube provides a forum for people to connect, inform, and inspire others across the globe and acts as a

distribution platform for original content creators and advertisers large and small"

("About YouTube," YouTube, 2005).

Uses of Social Media Platforms

Through social media platforms, businesses, organizations, or groups can reach people in a variety of ways (Agresta & Bough, 2011). Of teen users between 12 and 17 years old, 62% use online communication to learn about news and current events (Lenhart et al., 2010). According to Agresta and Bough (2011), people are reached by word-of-mouth communication, face-to-face communication, one-to-one communication, and friend-to-friend communication through social media platforms. Social media provides a form of communication regardless of the geographic location of the individual or group involved (Wandel, 2008). Technological advancement has allowed social media platforms to establish an increase in social interaction among all people (Joosten, 2012). According to Schulte (2012), humanity must embrace this technological advancement into electronic communication and forget about the paper-based world.

Currently, literacy classes are in U.S. schools, but in the future, literacy classes will focus on digital media (Watkins, 2009). "It is clear that a student's interactions with faculty and other students can have a great impact on college student experiences and could be considered pivotal to their success" (Joosten, 2012, p. 4). Lotkowski, Robbins, and Noeth (2004) show social involvement with and social support of college students as a moderate strength to increase retention and provide a positive experience for students. The primary use of social media platforms among teens and young adults is the ability to have a connection and be social when not face-to-face with another individual (Watkins,

2009). "Social networking sites offer a unique opportunity to promote socialization to the college environment" (DeAndrea, Ellison, LaRose, Steinfield, & Fiore, 2012, p. 16).

Oklahoma State University Platforms

According to Oklahoma State University news and communications, students have an array of social media platforms to communicate with the university ("Socially Orange," 2013). The OSU website lists all resources available to prospective students, current students, visitors, and alumni by the university as well as by administrative departments, academic departments and programs, student programs and resources, athletic departments and athletic venues as well as the Big 12 Conference. Social media platforms include Facebook, Twitter, Foursquare, Google+, and YouTube ("Socially Orange," 2013). The Oklahoma State University Alumni Association also has Flickr, which is a photo posting website, and SCVNGR, which is an interactive scavenger hunt platform (C. Carter, personal communication, February 24, 2013). The main goal of the Alumni Association posts are to increase awareness about Alumni Association programs and keep followers engaged on a wide variety of topics related to OSU including academics, athletics, and fundraising (C. Carter, personal communication, February 24, 2013).

College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources Platforms

The College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources at Oklahoma State University provides Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn as social media platforms to connect and communicate with prospective and current students as well as with visitors and alumni ("Connect with us!," 2013). Originally, CASNR had multiple CASNR Facebook pages; however, instead of updating several accounts with basically the same

information, they created a Facebook account that united prospective and current

students, alumni, and any others who have an interest in OSU CASNR (M. McCool,

personal communication, February 22, 2013). CASNR has 2,600 undergraduate and

graduate students ("OSU student profile," 2012). Broome et al. (2012) suggested college

ambassadors talk with students via social media platforms about relevant things such as

housing, tuition, and orientation. Universities choose the platform where students are and

let them talk to each other to establish a sense of community before they are in college

(Broome et al., 2012). The goal for CASNR is to post something at least once a day and

sometimes more often depending on the events taking place in the college, as well as to

create dialogue and for it to be a place where people felt free to ask questions (M.

McCool, personal communication, February 22, 2013). According to personal

communication with Megan McCool, former marketing and communications graduate

assistant, CASNR has Facebook and Twitter, which is scheduled through an external site

called Hootsuite (personal communication, February 22, 2013). The marketing and

communications graduate student is the person who is primarily responsible for all

CASNR social media platforms (M. McCool, personal communication, February 22,

2013).

Millennials

The current group of college students is known as millennials (Wandel, 2008).

The true meaning behind the name millennials is from the estimated 50 million people

between 18 and 29 years old who are "coming of age" in the new millennium (Angela,

2010, p. 1). This group is known to be the technical support group for the modern family

(Watkins, 2009). According to Myers and Sundaram (2012), these tech-savvy individuals

are digital natives. In this group, 74% connect to others via a laptop or handheld device wirelessly (Angela, 2010). With the amount of technology they use, millennials can seem lazy, needy, and impatient compared to former generations (Sheesly, 2002).

According to Angela (2010), only 60% of millennials were raised by both parents. The majority of these parents are baby boomers, but occasionally some are Generation X parents (Sheesly, 2002). The millennial generation will be the most educated due to the global economic need for knowledge; however, one in eight millennials will move back in with their parents after college because they do not have a job (Angela, 2010). Angela (2010) describes the millennials as the "always-connected" generation (p. 2). This group always has been connected and does not know a lifestyle without technology, managing both an online and offline lifestyle of communication (Sullivan, 2011). Eighty-three percent of millennials have a cell phone next to their bed while they sleep and almost all millennials have a hand-held device ready to use in a moment's notice as if it were "like a body part" (Angela, 2010, p. 2). According to Sheesly (2002), millennials learn by doing rather than learn and implement what they have learned later.

Schulte (2012) describes the millennial generation as a group of technological leaders who have the know-how to use apps and a variety of platforms. As leaders in the digital age, millennials prefer to use the Internet to find anything and believe it is the best source to find information (Sheesly, 2002). This group will help lead others to understand, use, and take advantage of technology for the future of society and the world (Schulte, 2012). These groups of people have been the transitional leaders into the digital age (Watkins, 2009). This generation prefers to type before handwriting anything

(Sheesly, 2002). This age group is about instant gratification, social fulfillment, and the ability to feel as if they contribute meaningfully to society (Schulte, 2012).

Millennial First-year Experience

America is well educated; however, a high school diploma is deemed inadequate for employment within this country (Lotkowski et al., 2004). Students need to attend college to secure a career and aid in the growth of the American economy (Lotkowski et al., 2004). Students come to college with a diverse set of skills and backgrounds, which makes it difficult to appeal to all students during their first year of college (McCarthy, 2010). To improve the transition, college students should socialize with each other and their institution, and social media sites can help with this (DeAndrea, 2012). Schools must provide the most advanced technology, including software packages, design packages, and online communication tools to provide students with the best and most up-to-date education (McCarthy, 2010). Universities should focus on providing support services for the first year to increase retention and overall student productivity from the beginning (Lotkowski et al., 2004). By having networks and support systems, students can transition into college easier (McCarthy, 2010). It also may be necessary to identify first-year students and place them into communication or social support groups from the start to help with growth throughout college (Lotkowski et al., 2004).

Higher grade point average is directly influenced by higher amounts of social interaction in college (Allen, Robbins, Casillas, & Oh, 2008). Joosten (2012) suggested several methods to build a online network: Use hash tags or similar dialects so conversations are grouped together; connect with new people through current friends; let the functionality of the platform find friends for you; and participate with your own

21

institution to build friendships in the same town. This network can become a professional or collegiate base for a social support group (Joosten, 2012).

To reduce uncertainty about going to college, universities should provide a positive expectation of the university to help in the college transition (DeAndrea, 2012). Facebook should be used as the best way to create a welcomed sense of connectivity before students come onto campus (McCarthy, 2010). As a result of using social media platforms, students who may otherwise have difficulty creating social groups can communicate (McCarthy, 2010). According to Broome et al. (2012), 74% of students expect colleges and universities to have a social media platform and 76% of prospective students would join a private network for their intended college or university, demonstrating more so now than ever social media interaction between student and university is critical. Online communication allows students to lower various barriers and encourages interaction (McCarthy, 2010). To have students who will stay in school after the first year, they must engage with each other and develop relationships and personal friendships (McCarthy, 2010). According to McCarthy (2010) social media platforms allow for all kinds of diverse groups to interact, including international and local students.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

The uses and gratifications theory outlines the different types of media and content that may or may not satisfy audiences' social and psychological needs (Haas, Katz, & Gurevitch, 1973). These social and psychological needs as well as the gratifications of the audience depend mostly on the mass media within his or her environment (Haas et al., 1973). The uses and gratifications theory has been used to

discover the usefulness of mass media for and by different audiences for more than 30

years (Larose, Mastro, & Eastin, 2001). By understanding consumers' social and

psychological needs, the researcher can gain insight on the uses and gratifications of

certain mass media (Haas et al., 1973). This leads researchers to assume society is aware

of its needs and can directly identify sources to meet these needs (Haas et al., 1973).

A person's individual needs may cause him or her to use one media tool before

another rather than find gratification from different scenarios with different mass media

(Rosengren, Wenner, & Palmgreen, 1985). According to Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch

(1974), researchers can fall into one of seven categories to the uses and gratifications

theory:

> 1) the *social and psychological origins* [emphasis added] of 2) *needs*,
>
> which generate 3) *expectations* of 4) the *mass media or other sources*,
>
> which lead to 5) differential *patterns* of media exposure (or engagement in
>
> other activities), resulting in 6) *need gratifications* and 7) other
>
> *consequences.* (p. 510)

Simply, this theory explains the way people use mass media communications to

satisfy their needs (Katz, 1974). The theory accounts for the reasons humans make

decisions about different media platforms and how they go about that decision depending

upon the seven approaches (Stafford, Stafford, & Schkade, 2004). These individuals'

social needs, beliefs, and values are what encourage use of mass media to find

gratification (Rosengren, 1985).

Rosengren, Wenner, and Palmgreen (1985) elaborate on the uses and

gratifications approach by saying the person or people using mass media are very active

and, therefore, the use of this media can become second-nature (Rosengren et al., 1985).

Throughout the usage of the media, multiple mediums compete with one another for the

spotlight (Rosengren et al., 1985). This competition creates a competitive sense of

gratification from multiple areas, giving the researcher the opportunity to see differences

among media areas (Rosengren et al., 1985). However, mass media may not always be

used for every uses and gratifications application because the person may have interest in

a variety of mass media or social media platforms (Rosengren et al., 1985).

Uses and Gratifications in Social Media Platforms

Originally, uses and gratifications focused on the promotion of mass

communication devices such as the radio (Stafford et al., 2004). The uses and

gratifications theory has been applied to several emerging new mass communications

devices, including television, computers, and the Internet (Stafford et al., 2004). The uses

and gratifications theory can be used for research primarily on the point of view of the

public and not from a workplace environment (Stafford et al., 2004). Companies may

begin to see a direct way to advertise by understanding the uses and gratifications of

social media platforms by its consumers (Stafford et al., 2004).

As new mass media and communication tools have become available (Wang,

Tchernev & Solloway, 2012), the need to understand what drives social media users to

one tool instead of another becomes more important (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010). The

use of new media, such as Facebook, has provided a new understanding of the uses and

gratifications theory (Wang et al., 2012). The use of social media is shown to gratify the

social needs of people because it is convenient and efficient to use (Wang et al., 2012).

Being alone can increase the need for and use of social media (Wang et al., 2012).

According Quan-Haase and Young (2010), users of social media do not replace one platform with another. Each social media platform fills a certain void for that particular area that another platform cannot (Quan-Haase et al., 2010). Each social media platform provides the opportunity for individualized interactions (Quan-Haase et al., 2010), and the uses and gratifications theory allows the researcher to determine which gratifications are important to the user and what the uses of each social media platforms are (Quan-Haase et al., 2010).

All aspects of an individual's situation should be considered before understanding the uses and gratifications in that scenario (Vincent et al., 2009). Vincent and Basil (2009) state everyone's use of mass media or social media platforms differs based on his or her personality, abilities, or social condition.

Summary

Students, faculty, and administrators should work together to provide ways for everyone to communicate, learn and teach using the best communication mediums available (McCarthy, 2010). Persistence is a key factor in helping first-year students adjust and establish social support (Lotkowski et al., 2004). As the millennial generation does not hesitate when needing to use technology, this fact offers an opportunity for schools or universities to provide the best feedback, support, and ultimately the best education they can via social media platforms (Sheesly, 2002). "Designing programs and policies that help students prepare for and successfully complete postsecondary education is vital if our country is to remain a global economic leader" (Lotkowski et al., 2004, p. 2). Social media's convenience can gratify the needs of current students (Wang et al., 2012); therefore, through university-provided social interaction, students will perform

better and, in return, universities should have higher retention and graduation rates (Allen et al., 2008). "Through their own use of social media, educators are realizing that social media offers the functionality to enhance student outcomes in the classroom" (Joosten, 2012).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the methods and procedures used to conduct this study. This chapter includes the approval of the study by the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) as well as an explanation of the study's research design, instrumentation, population, validity, reliability, and data analysis.

Institutional Review Board

Oklahoma State University policy and federal regulations require approval of all research studies related to human subjects before researchers can begin their research. The Oklahoma State University Office of University Research Services and the IRB conduct the review to protect the rights and welfare of human subjects involved in biomedical and behavioral research. This study was approved by the OSU IRB on August 23, 2012. The IRB application number assigned to this study was AG1240 (see Appendix A).

Research Design

This research used a descriptive design to collect the perceptions of for 2012 OSU College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources AG 1011 students about their use of social media platforms. This study was intended to analyze the types of social media

platforms used as well as the reasons respondents use social media platforms.

Instrumentation

The instrumentation used in the study was a researcher-developed electronic questionnaire built in and hosted by www.Qualtrics.com, a Web-based software program. The instrument was designed to determine the perceptions and self-reported usage of specific social media platforms by OSU CASNR AG 1011 students. The instrument included 17 items in three sections: demographic information, social media platform usage, and OSU CASNR social media platform usage (see Appendix B). Questions were asked using a variety of structures consisting of 1) one consent question, 2) five demographic questions; 3) three five-point summated rating scale questions; 4) one order-ranking item; and 5) two bi-point serial measure questions.

To meet an IRB requirement of the study design the first question asked respondents to give consent to participate. Respondents were informed the study presented minimal to no risk while participating and the researcher would maintain their privacy. Once a respondent gave consent, he or she was given the questionnaire.

The questionnaire included five demographic questions: age, sex, current academic major, location of residence prior to attending college, and student organization involvement while in high school. To meet the study's minimum age of 18, the first demographic question asked the respondents to provide their age. Those under 18 were allowed to answer the questions for course credit; however, their answers were not included.

Following the demographic questions, an item asked which social media platforms respondents use and was in the form of a check-all-that-apply question. The

respondents' choices were Facebook, Foursquare, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest, and Other.

One item in the instrument asked respondents the percentage of time each week they spent on each social media platform: Facebook, Foursquare, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest, and Other (if they identified use in the previous question).

The researcher-developed instrument included one ranking question. Respondents were asked to rank their uses of social media from most important to least important using the following options: connecting with friends; finding an internship; finding information about school events; shopping or searching for special offers; connecting with family; and finding a job.

Another item on the instrument asked the respondents to check all ways through which they expected to find information about OSU CASNR events or information, listed as: in my class; club meetings; email; signs, posters or fliers; CASNR social media; CASNR website; Student Success Center; *Cowboy Journal* magazine; personal contact with professors; and personal contact with students. This question asked respondents which communication channels they used to find information about: career fair; club meetings; scholarships; college events; departmental events; alumni events; available internships; available jobs; news about agricultural legislation; and news about production agriculture. Respondents could mark as many as were applicable.

For Question 10, a bi-point serial measure anchored as yes/no was used to ask if the respondent visited any of OSU's campus-wide social media platforms, not including CASNR platforms.

If the respondent indicated he or she used social media, the respondent's next question was a check-all-that-apply item to ask respondents which OSU social media platforms they used, listed as follows: Facebook, Foursquare, LinkedIn, Scavenger, Twitter, and YouTube.

Following this question or question 10 when "no" was chosen, respondents were given a bi-point serial measure anchored as a yes/no question to ask if the respondents were currently accessing an OSU CASNR social media platform.

Respondents who selected no were directed to the final question. Respondents who selected yes were directed to another check-all-that-apply question asking which OSU CASNR social media platforms they used, listed as: Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter.

If the respondents answered yes to the previous questions about OSU CASNR social media platforms, then they answered the following three questions depending upon which platforms they indicated using. These three questions were ordinal scaled questions for the level of agreement with the use of OSU CASNR social media platforms anchored as *Strongly Disagree*, *Disagree*, *Undecided*, *Agree*, and *Strongly Agree*.

The sections of agreement questions asked the respondents about their usage of the OSU CASNR Facebook (7 items), LinkedIn (4 items), and Twitter (7 items) sites, respectively.

The final question asked respondents what they wanted to see on an OSU CASNR social media platform and was a check-all-that-apply question. The respondents had the following choice options: upcoming CASNR events; available internships; available jobs; information about scholarships; news about production agriculture; news about

agricultural legislation; alumni events; alumni information; departmental fun facts; college fun facts; club meeting information; and tutoring/class work assistance.

Population

Steinberg (2011) defined population as a group of participants from which the researcher would want to draw conclusions. The population of this study included all OSU CASNR students enrolled in the AG 1011 Agricultural Orientation course in Fall 2012 (N = 489). The population was contacted via their Oklahoma State University email addresses. Email addresses were obtained through the online classroom portal Desire 2 Learn (D2L). The course included eight class sections: three on Monday and Wednesday and five on Tuesday and Thursday. All sections of class were 50-minute class periods.

Validity

According to Creswell (2012), the validity of the instrument should be determined to verify that the instrument's interpretation matches its proposed use. Face and content validity was determined in this research project with a panel of experts that consisted of three staff members in the CASNR Student Success Center; two members of the OSU Career Services staff; one faculty member from the Agricultural Education, Communications, and Leadership Department; and one member from the office of the Associate Dean of CASNR at Oklahoma State University.

The panelists were selected because of their experiences and knowledge of social media platforms, the agriculture industry, and the personal, professional, and academic goals of freshman-level students.

Upon completion of review, the panel of experts critiqued then discussed the instrument via email messaging with the researcher. Primary needs for improvement were

to ease the usage by respondents, to reword individual items for clarity, and to specify social media platforms used by OSU CASNR. Only the researcher and faculty committee chair revised the instrument using Qualtrics.

Reliability

Due to time constraints, the researcher was unable to conduct a pilot test. However, a Cronbach's alpha of .90 was calculated post-hoc to the ordinal-scaled Facebook perceptions. The instrument will provide a reliability measure for future research.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data for this research study was collected via an electronic survey instrument. The instrument was administered to all eight sections of the AG 1011 Agricultural Orientation course at OSU CASNR during the fall 2012 semester.

The data analysis consisted of examining the frequency of student-provided information as well as their self-reported usage of various social media platforms, OSU social media platforms, and OSU CASNR social media platforms. The ranges of scores were calculated, and the mode was used to analyze the respondents' perceptions of social media platforms. Further, one question provided data regarding the respondents' age. This data was analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Data was analyzed using Statistical Analysis System (SAS) version 9.1 for a PC-based computer system, Microsoft Office Excel 2007 on a PC-based computer system, and SPSS Statistics (SPSS) version 20.0.0 for an Apple-based computer system.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

Chapter IV presents findings of this research study. The results will be discussed

by order of and as they pertain to the objectives of the study.

Research Findings

Findings as Related to Objective One

Objective One sought to describe selected personal and educational characteristics

of Fall 2012 OSU CASNR AG 1011 students. The mean age of the respondents was

18.27 with a standard deviations of 1.43. The youngest students to respond were 18 and

the oldest student was 43 (see Table 1).

Table 1

Self-reported Age of OSU CASNR AG 1011 Students (n = 340)

Variable	n	Min	Max	Mdn	M	SD
Age	340	18	43	18	18.27	1.43

Note. Those under 18 were not permitted to complete the instrument to ensure
compliance with study's Institutional Review Board approved application.

Of the students who responded to the question concerning sex (see Table 2),

34.51% ($f = 117$) were male and 65.49% ($f = 222$) were female.

Table 2

Self-reported Sex of OSU CASNR AG 1011 Students

Variable	*f*	%
Sex (*n* = 340)		
Male	117	34.51
Female	222	65.49
No Response	1	0.00*

Note. *One respondent (0.0029%) did not give his or her sex.

In reference to where the students lived before attending Oklahoma State University (see Table 3), 24.71% (*f* = 84) lived in a large town of 10,000 to 50,000 population; 19.71% (*f* = 67) lived in a large city of 50,000 or more population; and 17.65% (*f* = 60) lived in a small town with a population of 10,000 or less.

Table 3

Self-reported Prior Living Location of OSU CASNR AG 1011 Students

Variable	*f*	%
Living Location (n = 340)		
On a farm	63	18.53
In a rural area	66	19.41
In a small town	60	17.65
In a large town	**84**	**24.71**
In a large city	67	19.7

Note. Mode in boldface. Respondents were asked to select only one prior living location.

When asked the primary academic major respondents were studying, 93 (27.35%) students indicated Animal Science with the Pre-Vet Option, 48 (14.12%) Animal

Science, 38 (11.18%) Agribusiness, 22 (6.47%) Agricultural Communications, and 22 (6.47%) Natural Resource Ecology and Management. No freshmen responded with Agricultural Leadership or Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering (See Table 4).

A question on the instrument asked respondents to indicate if they were involved in four specific organizations in high school: FFA, 4-H, National Honor Society, and Student Council. Of organizations provided by the researcher, 57.14% of respondents (f = 198) said they were involved in National Honor Society (See Table 5).

Respondents also could type any other organization in which they were involved. Of the respondents, 53.85% (f = 204) typed in organizations they were involved in other than the choices given (See Table 5). Of the respondents (f = 204) who provided other organizations, 17.65% of respondents (f = 36) said they were involved in music programs including band, orchestra, or choir. Additionally, the respondents who provided other organizations, 14.71% of respondents (f = 30) said they were involved in sports including baseball, basketball, football, soccer, and softball.

Table 4

OSU CASNR AG 1011 Students' Self-reported Primary Major

Variable	*f*	%
Major (*n* = 340)		
Agribusiness	38	11.18
Agribusiness (Pre-Vet Option)	7	2.06
Agricultural Communication	22	6.47
Agricultural Economics	9	2.65
Agricultural Education	8	2.35
Agricultural Leadership	0	0.00
Animal Science	48	14.12
Animal Science (Pre-Vet)	93	27.35
Biochemistry & Molecular Biology	35	10.29
Biochemistry & Molecular Biology (Pre-Vet)	15	4.41
Biosystems & Agricultural Engineering	0	0.00
Entomology	3	0.88
Entomology (Pre-Vet)	3	0.88
Environmental Science	9	2.65
Food Science	4	1.18
Horticulture	1	0.29
Landscape Architecture	5	1.47
Landscape Contracting	3	0.88
Natural Resource Ecology & Management	22	6.47
Natural Resource Ecology & Management (Pre-Vet)	4	1.18
Plant & Soil Sciences	6	1.76
LASSO	2	0.59
Undecided	3	0.88

Note. Respondents were asked to select one major.

Table 5

Self-reported High School Organization Membership by OSU CASNR AG 1011 Students

Variable		*f*	%
High School Organization (*n* = 340)			
	Other	204	53.85
	National Honor Society	198	57.14
	FFA	162	46.70
	Student Council	122	37.91
	4-H	84	25.55
Other Organization (*n* = 204)			
	Music	36	17.65
	Sports	30	14.71
	Fellowship of Christian Athletes	26	12.75
	Key Club	13	6.37
	Spanish Club or Honor Society	13	6.37

Note. Respondents were asked to check all that apply.

Findings as Related to Objective 2

In terms of finding information about OSU CASNR events or information through communication channels, 80.30% (*f* = 269) of respondents indicated they find information about the career fair in their classes (see Table 6). There were 73.13% (*f* = 245) respondents who indicated they find information about the career fair through email. In addition, 52.84% (*f* = 177) respondents indicated they find information about the career fair on signs, posters or fliers.

Table 6

OSU CASNR AG 1011 Student's Self-reported Use of Communication Channels to Find Information about Career Fair

Communication Channel	*f*	%
In my classes	**269**	**80.30**
Club Meetings	96	28.66
Email	245	73.13
Signs, Posters or Fliers	177	52.84
CASNR Social Media	94	28.06
CASNR Website	116	34.63
Student Success Center	85	25.37
Cowboy Journal magazine	33	9.85
Personal contact with professors	105	31.34
Personal contact with students	137	40.90

Note. Respondents were asked to check all that apply. Mode in boldface.

Of the AG 1011 students responding, 73.13% (*f* = 245) indicated they find information about club meetings via email (see Table 7). There were 60.60% (*f* = 203) respondents who indicated they find information about club meetings from signs, posters or fliers, and 54.63% (*f* = 183) respondents indicated they find information about club meetings in their club meetings.

Table 7

OSU CASNR AG 1011 Student's Self-reported Use of Communication Channels to Find Information about Club Meetings

Communication Channel	*f*	%
In my classes	155	46.27
Club Meetings	183	54.63
Email	**245**	**73.13**
Signs, Posters or Fliers	203	60.60
CASNR Social Media	64	19.10
CASNR Website	82	24.48
Student Success Center	41	12.24
Cowboy Journal magazine	15	4.48
Personal contact with professors	61	18.21
Personal contact with students	168	50.15

Note. Respondents were asked to check all that apply. Mode in boldface.

Of the AG 1011 students responding about communication channels to find information, 73.73% (*f* = 247) indicated they find information about scholarships via email (see Table 8). There were 54.33% (*f* = 182) of respondents who indicated they find information about the scholarships through the CASNR website, and 44.48% (*f* = 149) of respondents indicated they find information about scholarships in their classes.

Table 8

OSU CASNR AG 1011 Student's Self-reported Use of Communication Channels to Find Information about Scholarships

Communication Channel	*f*	%
In my classes	149	44.48
Club Meetings	110	32.84
Email	**247**	**73.73**
Signs, Posters or Fliers	93	27.76
CASNR Social Media	89	26.57
CASNR Website	182	54.33
Student Success Center	162	48.36
Cowboy Journal magazine	40	11.94
Personal contact with professors	145	43.28
Personal contact with students	95	28.36

Note. Respondents were asked to check all that apply. Mode in boldface.

Of the respondents, 75.52% (*f* = 253) indicated they find information about college events via email (see Table 9). There were 69.55% (*f* = 233) of respondents who indicated they find information about college events in their classes. Moreover, 59.70% (*f* = 200) of respondents indicated they find information about college events on signs, posters or fliers while 50.15% (*f* = 168) of respondents indicated they found information about college events from personal contact with students.

Table 9

OSU CASNR AG 1011 Student's Self-reported Use of Communication Channels to Find Information about College Events

Communication Channel	*f*	%
In my classes	233	69.55
Club Meetings	153	45.67
Email	**253**	**75.52**
Signs, Posters or Fliers	200	59.70
CASNR Social Media	102	30.45
CASNR Website	134	40.00
Student Success Center	78	23.28
Cowboy Journal magazine	60	17.91
Personal contact with professors	100	29.85
Personal contact with students	168	50.15

Note. Respondents were asked to check all that apply. Mode in boldface.

Of the AG 1011 students responding about communication channels to find information, 65.07% (*f* = 218) indicated they find information about departmental events in classes (see Table 10). There were 65.07% (*f* = 218) of respondents who indicated they find information about departmental events through email. Additionally, 44.48% (*f* = 149) of respondents indicated they find information about departmental events on the CASNR website.

Table 10

OSU CASNR AG 1011 Student's Self-reported Use of Communication Channels to Find Information about Departmental Events

Communication Channel	*f*	%
In my classes	**218**	**65.07**
Club Meetings	101	30.15
Email	218	65.07
Signs, Posters or Fliers	146	43.58
CASNR Social Media	97	28.96
CASNR Website	149	44.48
Student Success Center	81	24.18
Cowboy Journal magazine	35	10.45
Personal contact with professors	108	32.24
Personal contact with students	104	31.04

Note. Respondents were asked to check all that apply. Mode in boldface.

Of the AG 1011 students responding about communication channels to find information, 54.93% ($f = 184$) indicated they find information about alumni events via email (see Table 11). There were 39.70% ($f = 133$) of respondents who indicated they find information about alumni events from the CASNR website, and 34.63% ($f = 116$) of respondents indicated they find information about alumni events in their classes.

Table 11

OSU CASNR AG 1011 Student's Self-reported Use of Communication Channels to Find Information about Alumni Events

Communication Channel	*f*	%
In my classes	116	34.63
Club Meetings	54	16.12
Email	**184**	**54.93**
Signs, Posters or Fliers	108	32.24
CASNR Social Media	75	22.39
CASNR Website	133	39.70
Student Success Center	62	18.51
Cowboy Journal magazine	45	13.43
Personal contact with professors	73	21.79
Personal contact with students	61	18.21

Note. Respondents were asked to check all that apply. Mode in boldface.

Of the AG 1011 students responding about communication channels to find information, 68.06% ($f = 228$) indicated they find information about available internships via email (see Table 12). There were 45.37% ($f = 152$) of respondents who indicated they find information about available internships via the CASNR website, 45.07% ($f = 151$) of respondents indicated they find information about available internships through personal contact with professors, and 44.78% ($f = 150$) of respondents indicated they found information about available internships in the CASNR Student Success Center.

Table 12

OSU CASNR AG 1011 Student's Self-reported Use of Communication Channels to Find Information about Available Internships

Communication Channel	*f*	%
In my classes	114	34.03
Club Meetings	113	33.73
Email	**228**	**68.06**
Signs, Posters or Fliers	97	28.96
CASNR Social Media	92	27.46
CASNR Website	152	45.37
Student Success Center	150	44.78
Cowboy Journal magazine	36	10.75
Personal contact with professors	151	45.07
Personal contact with students	78	23.28

Note. Respondents were asked to check all that apply. Mode in boldface.

Of the AG 1011 students responding about communication channels to find information, 65.67% (*f* = 220) indicated they find information about available jobs via email (see Table 13). There were 46.57% (*f* = 156) of respondents who indicated they find information about available jobs from the CASNR Student Success Center. In addition, 43.58% (*f* = 146) of respondents indicated they find information about available jobs from the CASNR website, while 42.09% (*f* = 141) of respondents indicated they found information about available jobs from personal contact with professors.

Table 13

OSU CASNR AG 1011 Student's Self-reported Use of Communication Channels to Find Information about Available Jobs

Communication Channel	*f*	%
In my classes	88	26.27
Club Meetings	81	24.18
Email	**220**	**65.67**
Signs, Posters or Fliers	102	30.45
CASNR Social Media	84	25.07
CASNR Website	146	43.58
Student Success Center	156	46.57
Cowboy Journal magazine	42	12.54
Personal contact with professors	141	42.09
Personal contact with students	94	28.06

Note. Respondents were asked to check all that apply. Mode in boldface.

Of the AG 1011 students responding about communication channels to find information, 48.36% (f = 162) indicated they find information about news about agricultural legislation in their classes (see Table 14). There were 45.37% (f = 152) of respondents who indicated they find information about news about agricultural legislation through email, while 43.58% (f = 146) of respondents indicated they find information about news about agricultural legislation on the CASNR website.

Table 14

OSU CASNR AG 1011 Student's Self-reported Use of Communication Channels to Find Information about News about Agricultural Legislation

Communication Channel	*f*	%
In my classes	162	48.36
Club Meetings	77	22.99
Email	152	45.37
Signs, Posters or Fliers	68	20.30
CASNR Social Media	91	27.16
CASNR Website	146	43.58
Student Success Center	54	16.12
Cowboy Journal magazine	120	35.82
Personal contact with professors	98	29.25
Personal contact with students	71	21.19

Note. Respondents were asked to check all that apply.

Of the AG 1011 students responding about communication channels to find information, 51.04% ($f = 171$) who indicated they find information about news about production agriculture in their classes (see Table 15). There were 44.78% ($f = 150$) of respondents indicated they find information about news about production agriculture through email. Also, 41.39% ($f = 139$) of respondents indicated they find information about news about production agriculture from the CASNR website, and 35.22% ($f = 118$) of respondents indicated they found information about news about production agriculture in the *Cowboy Journal* magazine.

Table 15

OSU CASNR AG 1011 Student's Self-reported Use of Communication Channels to Find Information about News about Production Agriculture

Communication Channel	*f*	%
In my classes	**171**	**51.04**
Club Meetings	66	19.70
Email	150	44.78
Signs, Posters or Fliers	60	17.91
CASNR Social Media	86	25.67
CASNR Website	139	41.49
Student Success Center	49	14.63
Cowboy Journal magazine	118	35.22
Personal contact with professors	99	29.55
Personal contact with students	74	22.09

Note. Respondents were asked to check all that apply. Mode in boldface.

Findings as Related to Objective 3

Of the respondents using social media platforms, 94.12% (*f* = 320) reported they have a Facebook account (See Table 16). YouTube had 65.29% of the respondents (*f* = 222) using it. Twitter had 51.76% of respondents (*f* = 176) using it. Foursquare had 1.47% of respondents (*f* = 5) using it while 0.88% of respondents (*f* = 3) were using LinkedIn.

AG 1011 students' had the opportunity to type their own social media platform if it was not listed (see Table 17). Of the total students, 20.59% of respondents (*f* = 70)

typed in their own social media platform. Of the respondents who typed in their own

platform 14.71% ($f = 50$) wrote Instagram.

Table 16

Self-reported Use of Social Media Platforms by OSU CASNR AG 1011 Students

Social Media Platform	f	%
Facebook	320	94.12
Foursquare	5	1.47
LinkedIn	3	0.88
Twitter	176	51.76
YouTube	222	65.29
Pinterest	121	35.59
Other	70	20.59

Note. Respondents were asked to check all that apply.

Table 17

Self-reported Other Social Media Platforms Used by OSU CASNR AG 1011 Students

Platform ($n = 70$)	f	%
Instagram	44	63.77
Tumblr	10	14.49
Non Social Media Answers	9	13.04
Reddit	4	5.80
Stumble Upon	3	4.35

The respondents were asked to provide the percentage of time spent each week on social media platforms (see Table 18). Respondents spent 53.36% (n = 333) of their time on Facebook and 17.18% each week on Twitter. Also, the respondents spent 13.92% of their time on YouTube each week.

Table 18

OSU CASNR AG 1011 Students Self-reported Time Spent Per Week on Social Media Platforms

Platform	Respondents Who Use a Social Media Platform	Percent of Time Spent	
	N	M	SD
Facebook	333	53.36	29.52
Foursquare	333	0.13	1.69
LinkedIn	333	0.06	0.67
Twitter	333	17.18	22.7
YouTube	330	13.92	19.38
Pinterest	332	7.42	14.4
Other	328	8.19	19.67

In terms of using social media platforms, 225 respondents (73.29%) find connecting with friends' most important (see Table 19). Of the respondents, 40.56% (f = 116) find connecting with family second most important.

Respondents were asked to indicate the usage of an OSU social media platform and to identify which platforms they use. Of the respondents, 45.37% (f = 152) reported using an OSU social media platform (see Table 20).

Of those who use an OSU social media platform, 42.39% (f = 142) indicated they use social media to like OSU on Facebook. Also, 14.63% (f = 49) of respondents

indicated they use social media to follow OSU on Twitter. Of the respondents asked to

indicate their usage of CASNR social media platforms and identify which platforms they

use, 32.73% ($f = 109$) reported using CASNR social media platform while 67.27% ($f =$

224) reported not using CASNR social media platforms (see Table 20). Of those who use

CASNR social media platforms, 30.95% ($f = 104$) indicated they use social media to like

CASNR on Facebook. Also, 7.14% ($f = 24$) of respondents indicated they use social

media to follow CASNR on Twitter.

Table 19

OSU CASNR OSU CASNR AG 1011 Students Level of Importance Concerning Use of Social Media Platforms

	Rank												
	1		2		3		4		5		6		7	
Variable	*F*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%
Connecting w/ friends	**225**	**73.29**	5	1.75	8	2.71	4	1.39	52	17.45	9	3.13	6	6.06
Connecting w/ family	2	0.65	**116**	**40.56**	24	8.14	31	10.76	3	1.01	106	36.81	6	6.06
Finding information about school events	14	4.56	19	6.64	**143**	**48.47**	32	11.11	58	19.46	16	5.56	11	11.11
Finding a job	2	0.65	63	22.03	11	3.73	**106**	**36.81**	9	3.02	93	32.29	2	2.02
Shopping or searching for special offers	6	1.95	63	22.03	53	17.97	**93**	**32.29**	19	6.38	46	15.97	9	9.09
Finding an internship	58	18.89	5	1.75	56	18.98	11	3.82	**157**	**52.68**	8	2.78	7	7.07
Other	0	0.00	15	5.24	0	0.00	11	3.82	0	0.00	10	33.47	**58**	**58.59**

Note. Mode in boldface.

Table 20

CASNR AG 1011 Students Self-reported Usage of OSU Social Media Platforms

Use of OSU campus-wide social media platforms (*n* = 195)	*f*	%
Facebook	**142**	**42.39**
Foursquare	0	0.00
LinkedIn	3	0.90
Scavenger	0	0.00
Twitter	49	14.63
YouTube	31	9.25

Note. Respondents were asked to check all social media platforms that apply. Mode in boldface.

Table 21

CASNR AG 1011 Students Self-reported Usage of CASNR Social Media Platforms

CASNR social media platforms	*f*	%
Facebook	**104**	**30.95**
LinkedIn	1	0.30
Twitter	24	7.14

Note. Respondents were asked to check all social media platforms that apply. Mode in boldface.

Findings as Related to Objective 4

Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement concerning the use of OSU CASNR social media platforms. Respondents *agree* 64.42% (*f* = 67) the academic information on the OSU CASNR Facebook site is useful (see Table 21). Also, respondents *agree* 55.77% (*f* = 58); they would use the OSU CASNR Facebook site to

Table 22

Self-reported Agreement with Facebook by OSU CASNR AG 1011 Students

	Level of Agreement									
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
Element	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
The academic information on the OSU CASNR Facebook site is useful. (n = 104)	4	3.85	0	0.00	8	7.69	**67**	**64.42**	25	24.04
I would use the OSU CASNR Facebook site to request information about upcoming activities. (n = 104)	4	3.85	5	4.81	13	12.50	**58**	**55.77**	24	23.08
I would seek the academic support (tutors, advising, etc.) I need from the OSU CASNR Facebook site. (n = 104)	6	5.77	18	17.31	30	28.85	**35**	**33.65**	15	14.42
The OSU CASNR Facebook site strengthens my personal connection to CASNR. (n = 104)	5	4.81	5	4.81	21	20.19	**55**	**52.88**	18	17.31
I find the OSU CASNR Facebook site easily accessible. (n = 102)	5	4.90	2	1.96	8	7.84	**57**	**55.88**	30	29.41
I would use the OSU CASNR Facebook site to request information about scholarships. (n = 104)	5	4.81	18	17.31	20	19.23	**40**	**38.46**	21	20.19
The OSU CASNR Facebook site answers all of my career-related (résumé critique, job postings, etc.) questions. (n = 104)	4	3.85	12	11.54	37	35.58	**37**	**35.58**	14	13.46

Note. Mode in boldface.

request information about upcoming activities. Additionally, respondents *agree* 55.88% (*f* = 57) finding the OSU CASNR Facebook site easily accessible.

The next section of agreement questions asked the respondents about their usage of the OSU CASNR LinkedIn site. AG 1011 students *agree* 100.00% (*f* = 1) they use the OSU CASNR LinkedIn to request information about upcoming career-related activities; The OSU CASNR LinkedIn site strengthens my personal connection to CASNR; and The OSU CASNR LinkedIn site answers some of my career-related (résumé critique, job postings, etc.) questions (see Table 22). Also, respondents *disagree* 100.00% (*f* = 1) they find the OSU CASNR LinkedIn site easily accessible. Additionally, respondents 50.00% (*f* = 1) s*trongly* a*gree* using the OSU CASNR LinkedIn to request information about upcoming career-related activities; The OSU CASNR LinkedIn site strengthens my personal connection to CASNR; I find the OSU CASNR LinkedIn site easily accessible; and The OSU CASNR LinkedIn site answers some of my career-related (résumé critique, job postings, etc.) questions.

Finally, AG 1011 respondents 54.17% (*f* = 13) a*gree* the academic information on the OSU CASNR Twitter site is useful (see Table 23). Of the AG 1011 students 37.50% (*f* = 9) *agree* they would use the OSU CASNR Twitter to request information about upcoming activities. Also, AG 1011 students 41.67% (*f* = 10) *agree* the OSU CASNR Twitter site strengthens my personal connection to CASNR. AG 1011 respondents 29.17% (*f* = 7) d*isagree* about using the OSU CASNR Twitter site to request information about scholarships.

The respondents were asked to report the need for select educational and professional opportunities via OSU CASNR social media platforms; 90.58% (*f* = 298)

Table 23

Self-reported Agreement with LinkedIn by OSU CASNR AG 1011 Students

	Level of Agreement									
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
Element	*F*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*F*	%	*f*	%
I would use the OSU CASNR LinkedIn site to request information about upcoming activities. (*n* = 1)	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	**1**	**100.00**	0	0.00
The OSU CASNR LinkedIn site strengthens my personal connection to CASNR. (*n* = 1)	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	**1**	**100.00**	0	0.00
I find the OSU CASNR LinkedIn site easily accessible. (*n* = 1)	0	0.00	**1**	**100.00**	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
The OSU CASNR LinkedIn site answers all of my career-related (résumé critique, job postings, etc.) questions. (*n* = 1)	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	**1**	**100.00**	0	0.00

Note. Mode in boldface.

Table 24

Self-reported Agreement with Twitter by OSU CASNR AG 1011 Students

	Level of Agreement									
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
Element	*F*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*F*	%	*f*	%
The academic information on the OSU CASNR Twitter site is useful. (*n* = 24)	0	0.00	0	0.00	6	25.00	**13**	**54.17**	5	20.83
I would use the OSU CASNR Twitter site to request information about upcoming activities. (*n* = 24)	0	0.00	7	29.17	5	20.83	**9**	**37.50**	3	12.50
I would seek the academic support (tutors, advising, etc.) I need from the OSU CASNR Twitter site. (*n* = 24)	1	4.17	4	16.67	**12**	**50.50**	3	12.50	4	16.67
The OSU CASNR Twitter site strengthens my personal connection to CASNR.(*n* = 24)	0	0.00	2	8.33	8	33.33	**10**	**41.67**	4	16.67
I find the OSU CASNR Twitter site easily accessible. (*n* = 24)	0	0.00	0	0.00	3	12.50	**14**	**58.33**	7	29.17
I would use the OSU CASNR Twitter site to request information about scholarships. (*n* = 24)	3	12.50	6	25.00	**7**	**29.17**	4	16.67	4	16.67
The OSU CASNR Twitter site answers all of my career-related (résumé critique, job postings, etc.) questions. (*n* = 24)	1	4.17	**9**	**37.50**	7	29.17	5	20.83	2	8.33

Note. Mode in boldface.

reported need information about upcoming CASNR events (see Table 24). There was

90.27% ($f = 297$) reporting needing information about scholarships. Of those reporting a

need from CASNR social media platforms, 85.41% ($f = 281$) indicated they need

information about available internships. Also, 81.46% ($f = 268$) of respondents indicated

they need club meeting information from OSU CASNR social media. Another 79.64% (f

$= 262$) of respondents indicated they need information about available jobs from OSU

CASNR social media.

Table 25

OSU CASNR AG 1011 Students Self-reported Need from OSU CASNR Social Media Platforms

Need	*f*	%
Upcoming CASNR events	298	90.58
Information about scholarships	297	90.27
Available Internships	281	85.41
Club meeting information	268	81.46
Available jobs	262	79.64
Tutoring/class work assistance	260	79.03
Departmental fun facts	186	56.53
College fun facts	180	54.71
News about production agriculture	150	45.59
News about agriculture legislation	137	41.64
Alumni events	116	35.26
Alumni information	98	29.79
Other	1	0.30

Note. Respondents were asked to check all that apply.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

This chapter provides conclusions, recommendations, and implications based on the findings of this study as they relate to the four objectives determined by the researcher. The last section will include further discussion of the research.

Conclusions and Implications for Objective 1

The first objective sought to identify selected personal and academic characteristics of students in the study. Specifically, students' age, sex, major, residence prior to coming to OSU, and high school organizational involvement were examined.

In the fall semester of 2012, the most common student in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources at Oklahoma State University AG 1011 class was an 18-year-old female who grew up in a town or city and was a member of National Honor Society and/or another student organization while in high school. While the range of academic majors was diverse, in terms of academic disciplines, one in two respondents indicated either a major in animal science or in one of five pre-veterinary science options within CASNR.

In comparison to Kimmelshue's study (2012), the proportion of students from non-rural area is unchanged from those who were enrolled in the same course during the

previous year. However, the percentage of students who were in 4-H or FFA, the

traditional agricultural student organizations, before coming to OSU was lower in Fall

2012 than in 2011 (Kimmelshue, 2012). Additionally, the age and gender of the students

is similar to the enrollment at comparable land grant university (Koon, Frick, & Igo,

2009).

<center>**Conclusions and Implications for Objective 2**</center>

Overall, AG 1011 students in the fall of 2012 used email as the primary method to

find information about club meetings, scholarships, college events, alumni events,

available internships, available jobs, news about agricultural legislation, and news about

production agriculture. In previous studies, students also favored email for information

access (Booth, 2010; Martinez et al., 2009; Prensky, n.d.; Watkins, 2009). When

considering communications tools to find information about career fair and departmental

events, OSU CASNR AG 1011 students learn about these events primarily through their

classes. Depending the type of information needed, students also used the following

additional sources to get information: signs, posters and fliers; club meetings; and

personal contact with students. Somewhat surprisingly, students did not use the CASNR

Student Success Center for information about such things as scholarships, internships, or

jobs. The students are least likely to use the *Cowboy Journal* magazine for learning about

any of these subjects.

<center>**Conclusions and Implications for Objective 3**</center>

In terms of social media platforms, the typical student in the fall 2012 OSU

CASNR AG 1011 had Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube accounts. However, she was

more likely to use Pinterest or Instagram than LinkedIn. When using their social media

<center>60</center>

accounts, respondents spent the majority of their time on Facebook, dividing their other

social media interactions between Twitter and YouTube. Previous studies also have

found students used Facebook more than 50% of the time they use social media platforms

(DeAndrea et al., 2011; Pempek et al., 2009; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010).

By far, the most important reason students use Facebook is to connect with their

friends. Using it to find internships is highly unlikely and low on their priority lists for

this platform. As a whole, the students in AG 1011 do not use either the OSU or the

CASNR social media platforms.

Conclusions and Implications for Objective 4

Students who use on the OSU CASNR Facebook site find its content useful as

well as accessible. They would use this site to request information. Most importantly, the

OSU CASNR Facebook site strengths the students' connect to the college. Additionally,

while few students follow CASNR on Twitter, those who do find the information useful

and the site easily accessible.

While students perceived these two social media platforms as useful, they want to

see the following information shared by CASNR via Facebook and Twitter: upcoming

CASNR events; information about scholarships, internships, and jobs; club meetings;

college and departmental "fun facts"; and tutoring and classwork assistance.

Recommendations for Practice

Based on the findings, conclusions, and implications of this study, the researcher

presents the following recommendations for practice.

As faculty, staff, and student organizations consider methods to reach students,

they should use email as their primary communications tool to share information and

maintain contact with AG 1011 students. Before initiating communication through email, however, an effort should be made to determine if students, especially those in their first semester on campus, use their OSU-assigned email accounts and/or a different account.

While the OSU CASNR AG 1011 students who use the CASNR Facebook site found it useful, an effort should be made to increase awareness of the site and the information it provides among all students. The OSU CASNR Student Success Center should continue to use Facebook as well as email to inform students about upcoming events, including club meetings; jobs, internships, and scholarships; tutoring and class work assistance; and college and departmental information. According to the literature, students use social media platforms to feel connected with others and use Facebook the majority of their time on the Internet (DeAndrea et al., 2011; Duggan & Brenner, 2013; McCarthy, 2010); therefore, the OSU CASNR Student Success Center should maintain its social media presence to promote and encourage a connection to the college.

If Twitter is to continue to be used to share information with students, its availability should be promoted with students. In addition, if a significant number of students are not using a specific social media platform, such as Twitter and LinkedIn, those in the college who administer the various platforms should work to increase student usage or reconsider expending resources to continue their use.

The OSU CASNR Student Success Center was developed to provide the resources students need to thrive and succeed while at OSU and as they make the transition to the workforce as alumni. AG 1011 students did not perceive the SSC as a source for information about scholarships, internships or jobs. Therefore, the college administration and the SSC staff need to re-evaluate current practices to increase

awareness about the value of the SSC to students, especially as they begin their educational experiences at OSU.

Recommendations for Research

Based on the findings, conclusions, and implications of this study, the researcher presents the following recommendations for research.

CASNR students have been involved in high school student organizations, therefore, future research should be conducted to see if previous involvement in various organizations affects usage of social media platforms. Additionally, research should be conducted to determine if a student's major affects usage of particular social media platforms. Currently, most departments have major-specific student organizations; future research could determine if these organizations use social media and if this affects students' use of a particular social media platform.

As this study primarily considered the perspectives of new CASNR students, future research should be done to determine the usage of social media platforms of students at various academic levels as well as of CASNR alumni at the professional levels.

While students use Facebook, few are connecting with CASNR's Facebook page. Future research should determine specific problems students face when obtaining information via Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Additionally, research should determine if students prefer text or visual posts on social media platforms as well as if the number of posts per day is meeting the needs of CASNR students.

While this research focused on students' use of social media platforms, it appears the demographic characteristics of students in the OSU College of Agricultural Sciences

and Natural Resources is changing over time in terms of where students were raised and their involvement in student organizations. This potential trend should be monitored through future research to assist faculty with their approach to agricultural curricula.

Additional Discussion

The OSU College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources must continue to monitor where their students find information about happenings within the college. What communication tools do students use? How can the college best use these tools to aid them in providing educational and professional resources to their students? Determining the factors that most influence students when it comes to social media will help better serve CASNR students now and in the future.

The opportunities provided by any educational institution are vital to the success of students. As technology and the uses of said technology grows and changes, educational institutions must maintain open communication with their students. Universities must continue to provide educational information through the most frequented communications tools.

By effectively using social media platforms, the OSU CASNR Student Success Center will be able to connect and provide a greater social bond with its students. The outcome of an effective social media presence by OSU CASNR will ultimately gratify students' needs to connect and maintain these connections with their friends, the college, and university as a whole.

REFERENCES

Agresta, S., & Bough, B. B. (2011). *Perspectives on social media marketing*. Boston, MA: Course Technology, a part of Cengage Learning.

Allen, J., Robbins, S., Casillas, A., & Oh, I. (2008). Third-year college retention and transfer: Effects of academic performance, motivation, and social connectedness. *Research in Higher Education*, *49*(7), 647-664. doi: 10.1007/s11162-008-9098-3.

Angela, P. M. (2010, Sep 06). Millennials - the "always connected" generation. *The Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education, 20*, 14-16. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/751193424?accountid=4117

Beld, B. V. D. (2012). *What is google really all about?*. Retrieved from http://www.stateofsearch.com/what-is-google-really-all-about/

Booth, P. (2010). *Digital fandom: New media studies*. (Vol. 68). New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.

Broome, R., Croke, B., Staton, M., & Zachritz, H. (2012). The social side of student retention. *Inigral insights*, 1-7. Retrieved from Campbell, A. (2011, March 7). *What the heck is an "app"*. Retrieved from http://smallbiztrends.com/2011/03/what-is-an-app.html

Carter, C. (2011, October 31). *Homecoming 2011 scvngr winners announced*. Retrieved

from http://orangeconnection.org/s/860/index-blue-

social.aspx?sid=860&gid=1&pgid=252&cid=10122&ecid=10122&ciid=26http://

www.inigral.com/research/social-side-of-student-retention/

Constantinides, E., & Zinck Stagno, M. C. (2011). Potential of the social media as

instruments of higher education marketing: A segmentation study. *Journal of

marketing for higher education*, *21*(1), 7-24. Retrieved from

http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08841241.2011.573593

Creswell , J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating

quantitative and qualitative research*. (4th ed., pp. 297-298). Boston, MA:

Pearson Education, Inc.

DeAndrea, D. C., Ellison, N. B., LaRose, R., Steinfield, C., & Fiore, A. (2012). Serious

social media: On the use of social media for improving students' adjustment to

college. *Internet and higher education*, *15*, 15-23. doi:

10.1016/j.iheduc.2011.05.009

Duggan, M., & Brenner, J. Pew Research Center, (2013).*Social networking site users: A

demographic portrait of users of various social media services*. Retrieved from

website: http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2013/Social-media-users/Social-

Networking-Site-Users/Demo-portrait.aspx

Facebook. (2004). *About*. Retrieved from www.facebook.com/facebook/info

Fincham, K. (2012, September 21). [Web log message]. Retrieved from

http://www.poynter.org/how-tos/journalism-education/188408/what-every-young-

journalist-should-know-about-using-twitter/

Foursquare. (2013). *About foursquare*. Retrieved from https://foursquare.com/about/

Google. (2013). *Get to know google* . Retrieved from http://www.google.com/intl/en/
/learnmore/features.html

Haas, H., Katz, E., & Gurevitch, M. (1973). On the use of mass media for important
things. *American sociological review*, *38*(2), 164-181. Retrieved from
http://www.jstor.org/stable/2094393

Hoppe, H. (2009). Integrating learning processes across boundaries of media, time and
group scale. Engineering the User Interface, 11-28. doi: 10.1007/978-1-84800-
136-7_2.

Hostetler, K. M., & Deeter, L. M. (2012). Computer usage and perceptions of incoming
students at a 2-year agricultural school. *North american colleges and teachers of
agriculture*, *56*(3), 2-5. Retrieved from
http://search.proquest.com/docview/1112919542?accountid=4117

Oklahoma State University. Institutional Research and Information Management, VP of
Administration and Finance. (2012). *OSU student profile fall 2012*. Retrieved
from Oklahoma State University website:
http://vpaf.okstate.edu/IRIM/StudentProfile/2012/PDF/2012StudentProfile.pdf

Jones, S. (2002). The Internet goes to college: How students are living in the future with
today's technology. *Pew Internet and American Life Project*, 01-23. Retrieved
from http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED472669.pdf.

Junco, R., Heiberget, G., & Loken, E. (2011). The effect of twitter on college student
engagement and grades.*Journal of computer assisted learning*, *27*, 119-132. doi:
10.1111/j.1365-2729.2010.00387.x

Karch, M. (2013). *Google* . Retrieved from http://google.about.com/od/p/g/Google-
   plus.htm

Katz, E., Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. (1974). Uses and gratifications research. *The
   public opinon quarterly*, *37*(4), 509-523. Retrieved from
   http://www.jstor.org/stable/2747854

Kiesow, D. (2010, September 23). [Web log message]. Retrieved from
   http://www.poynter.org/latest-news/media-lab/mobile-media/105855/location-
   based-games-worth-a-try-for-media/

Kiss, J. (2010, April 26). [Web log message]. Retrieved from
   http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/pda/2010/apr/26/location-foursquare-
   acquisition

Koon, L. A. F., Frick, M. J., & Igo, C. G. (2009). What kind of students are enrolling in a
   college of agriculture and are they staying?: A mixed methods approach. *NACTA
   Journal*, *53*(2), 21-28. Retrieved from
   http://www.nactateachers.org/attachments/article/159/Koon_June_2009_NACTA
   _JOUNAL_final-4.pdf

Krishna, M. S., Suvedi, M., & Eunice, F. F. (2011). Undergraduate Students1 use of time
   in the college of agriculture and natural resources at michigan state
   university. *NACTA Journal, 55*(4), 45-52. Retrieved from
   http://search.proquest.com/docview/927746157?accountid=4117

Kuh, G., Cruce, T., Shoup, R., Kinzie, J., & Gonyea, R. (2008). Unmasking the effects of
   student engagement on first-year college grades and persistence. *Journal of*

Higher Education, *79*(5), 540-563. Retrieved from

http://www.jstor.org/stable/25144692.

Larose, R., Mastro, D., & Eastin, M. S. (2001). Understanding internet usage: A social-

sognitive approach to uses and gratifications. *Social science computer review*,

19(4), 395-413. doi: 10.1177/089443930101900401

LASSO center: Academic review committee (2013). Retrieved March 4, 2013, from

https://lasso.okstate.edu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=37&It

emid=35

Lenhart, A., Purcell, K., Smith, A., & Zickuhr, K. (2010). Social media & mobile Internet

use among teens and young adults. *Pew Internet & American Life Project,* 01-37.

Retrieved from http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Social-Media-and-Young-

Adults.aspx.

LinkedIn. (2003). *What is linkedin?*. Retrieved from learn.linkedin.com/what-is-linkedin/

Lotkowski, V., Robbins, S., & Noeth, R. (2004). The role of academic and non-academic

factors in improving college retention. *ACT Policy Report*, Retrieved from

http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/college_retention.pdf.

Martinez, A. M., & Wartman, K. L. (2009). *Online social networking on campus*. (1st

ed.). Marceline, MO: Walsworth Publishing Company.

McCarthy, J. (2010). Blended learning environments: Using social media networking

sites to enhance the first year experience. *Australian journal of education

technology*, *26*(6), 729-740. Retrieved from

http://www.ascilite.org.au/ajet/ajet26/mccarthy.html

Metcalf, A. (2011, January 08). *"app" voted 2010 word of the year by the american dialect society*. Retrieved from http://www.americandialect.org/app-voted-2010-word-of-the-year-by-the-american-dialect-society-updated

Myers, M. D., & Sundaram, D. (2012, April 1). *Digital natives: Rise of the social networking generation*. Retrieved from http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=buh&AN=86149365&site=ehost-live

Oklahoma State University (2011, October 20). *"America's greatest homecoming celebration" to be most interactive* [Press Release]. Retrieved from https://news.okstate.edu/press-releases/1246-americas-greatest-homecoming-celebration-to-be-most-interactive

Oklahoma State University. (2012). *2012-2013 university catalog*. Informally published manuscript, Office of the Registrar, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK, Retrieved from http://registrar.okstate.edu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=424&Itemid=74

Pempek, T. A., Yermolayeva, Y. A., & Calvert, S. L. (2009). College students' social networking experiences on facebook. *Journal of applied developmental psychology*, *30*, 227-238. doi: 10.1016/j.appdev.2008.12.010

Prensky, M. (n.d.). Digital natives, digital immigrants. (2001). *On the horizon*, *9*(5), 1-6. Retrieved from http://www.marcprensky.com/writing/prensky - digital natives, digital immigrants - part1.pdf

Quan-Haase, A., & Young, A. L. (2010). Uses and gratifications of social media: A

comparison of facebook and instant messaging. *Bulletin of science technology

and society*, *30*(5), 350-361. doi: 10.1177/0270467610380009

Pinterest. (2010). *What is pinterest?*. Retrieved from pinterest.com/about/

Rhoades, E., Irani, T., Telg, R., & Myers, B. (2008). Internet as an information source:

Attitudes and usage of students enrolled in a college of agriculture

course. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, *49*(2), 108-117. doi:

10.5032/jae.2008.02108.

Rosengren, K., Wenner, L., & Palmgreen, P. (1985). *Media gratifications research*. (1st

ed., Vol. 1). Beverly Hills, California: SAGE Publications.

Schulte, Margaret F,D.B.A., F.A.C.H.E. (2012). The millennials: Challenges,

opportunities, and promise. *Frontiers of Health Services Management, 29*(1), 1-2.

Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/1039642811?accountid=4117

SCVNGR. (2008). *Scvngr support*. Retrieved from

support.scvngr.com/entries/20299901-what-is-scvngr

Shedden, D. (2011, October 10). [Web log message]. Retrieved from

http://www.poynter.org/latest-news/business-news/tracker/149019/flashback-to-

2005-huffpost-youtube-launched-podcasts-proliferate-print-needs-its-own-ipod/

Sheesly, D. (2002). The 'net generation. *College & undergraduate libraries*, *9*(2), 25-42.

Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1300/J106v09n02_04

Socially Orange. (n.d.). *In Oklahoma State University's News and Communication*.

Retrieved from http://osu.okstate.edu/news/social_directory_page.html

Sonderman, J. (2012, March 15). [Web log message]. Retrieved from

http://www.poynter.org/latest-news/mediawire/166663/pinterest-says-its-

conscious-of-copyright-issues/

Stafford, T. F., Stafford, M. R., & Schkade, L. L. (2004). Determing uses and

gratifications for the internet. *Decision sciences*, *35*(2), 259-288. doi:

10.1111/j.00117315.2004.02524.x.

Steinberg, W. J. (2011). *Statistics alive!*. (2nd ed., p. 4). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage

Publications, Inc.

Sreenivasan, S. (2006, June 15). [Web log message]. Retrieved from

http://www.poynter.org/how-tos/digital-strategies/web-tips/75747/linkedin-

anyone/

Sullivan, B. K. (2011, August 12). *Are you a digital native or a digital immigrant?*.

Retrieved from http://bigdesignevents.com/2011/08/are-you-a-digital-native-or-a-

digital-immigrant/

Tenore, M. (2012, December 10). [Web log message]. Retrieved from

http://www.poynter.org/how-tos/newsgathering-storytelling/197303/5-ways-

journalists-are-using-pinterest/

Thompson, B., & Mazer, J. (2009). College student ratings of student academic support:

Frequency, importance, and modes of communication. *Communication

Education*, *58*(3), 433-458. doi: 10.1080/03634520902930440.

Twitter. (2006). *About twitter*. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/about

Vincent, R. C., & Basil, M. D. (2009). College students' news gratifications, media use, and current events knowledge. *Journal of broadcasting & electronic media*, *41*(3), 380-392. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08838159709364414

Wandel, T. L. (2008). Colleges and universities want to be your friend: Communicating via online social networking. *Planning for higher education*, *37*(1), 35-48. Retrieved from javascript:popUpExt('http://www1.scup.org/PHE/FMPro?-db=PubData.fp5&-lay=ART&-format=read_inner.htm&-error=error.htm&ID=PUB-IDNpkF7eHZ5P3grwbP&-Find');

Wang, Z., Tchernev, J., & Solloway, T. (2012). Adynamic longitudinal examination of social media use, needs, and gratifications among college students. *Computers in human behavior*, *28*(5), 1829-1839. Retrieved from http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S074756321200129X

Watkins, S. C. (2009). *The young and the digital: What the migration to social-network sites, games, and anytime, anywhere media means for our future*. (1st ed.). Boston. MA: Beacon Press.

YouTube. (2005). *About youtube*. Retrieved from www.youtube.com/t/about_youtube

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Approval of Institutional Review Board

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date:	Thursday, August 23, 2012
IRB Application No	AG1240
Proposal Title:	Freshmen's Perceptions of OSU CASNR Communications Tools
Reviewed and Processed as:	Exempt

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved   Protocol Expires: 8/22/2013

Principal Investigator(s):

Cody Cramer
1801 E. Elm Ave.
Stillwater, OK 74074

Shelly Sitton
448 Ag Hall
Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

☒ The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI, advisor, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Beth McTernan in 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, beth.mcternan@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

Shelia M. Kennison

Shelia Kennison, Chair
Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire

Default Question Block

Thank you for participating in this study. Enter your full name and OSU email address below to receive assignment credit for AG 1011. Your information will not be connected with your responses prior to your name being provided to your AG 1011 professor.

In addition, entering your information will keep you from receiving additional messages about this specific questionnaire.

First Name

Last Name

OSU email address

Default Question Block

Oklahoma State University (OSU) and the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (CASNR) use multiple methods to connect with current and prospective students. This research is to help CASNR improve its use of social media platforms and its student/alumni magazine.

You are required to complete this questionnaire as an assignment for AG 1011. However, you do not have to allow your answers to be used in the research. Please answer the following question:

You may use my questionnaire responses as part of the research project.

○ Yes

○ No

In this questionnaire, you will be asked to answer three sets of questions. The first set of questions is for classification purposes only to provide demographic data. Your responses will allow the researchers to group the answers of all respondents and will never be associated with you as an individual.

What is your age?

[   ]

What is your sex?

○ Male

○ Female

What is your primary major?

[‡]

Prior to attending Oklahoma State University, where did you live? Pick the one that most closely matches.

○ On a farm

○ In a rural area

○ In a small town (10,000 or less)

○ In a large town (10,000-50,000)

○ In a large city (50,000 or more)

In which of the following organizations were you a member while in high school? Check all that apply.

☐ FFA

☐ 4-H

☐ National Honor Society

☐ Student Council

☐ Other Clubs or organizations

[   ]

The following set of questions concerns your usage of social media platforms.

Which of the following social media platforms do you use? Check all that apply.

☐ Facebook

☐ Foursquare

☐ LinkedIn

☐ Twitter

☐ YouTube

☐ Pinterest

☐ Other

[   ]

Of the time you spend each week on social media platforms, what percentage of time do you spend on each of the following? Total must equal 100 percent.

Facebook	0
Foursquare	0
LinkedIn	0
Twitter	0
YouTube	0
Pinterest	0
Other (if identified in the previous question) [ ]	0
Total	0

How do you use social media? Please rank the following items in the order of importance to you with 1 being the highest and 7 being the lowest.

Click and drag each item from the left box into the rank box on the right. You can rearrange the order of the items within the rank box, as well.

Items
Connecting with friends
Finding an internship
Finding information about school events
Shopping or searching for special offers
Connecting with family
Finding a job
Other [   ]

Please rank the uses of social media platforms from most important to least important.

Which of the following communications channels do you expect to use to find information about these OSU CASNR events or information? Please check all that apply.

	In my classes	Club Meetings	Email	Signs, Posters or Fliers	CASNR Social Media	CASNR Website	Student Success Center	Cowboy Journal magazine	Personal contact with professors	Personal contact with students
Career Fair	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Club Meetings	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Scholarships	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
College events	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Departmental events	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Alumni events	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Available internships	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Available jobs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
News about agricultural legislation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
News about production agriculture	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Do you currently visit **any** of OSU's campus-wide social media platforms, not including CASNR platforms?

○ Yes

○ No

Which of the following OSU social media platforms do you use? Check all that apply.

☐ Facebook

☐ Foursquare

☐ LinkedIn

☐ Scavenger

☐ Twitter

☐ YouTube

Do you currently access an OSU CASNR social media platform? For example, do you visit the OSU CASNR Facebook site?

○ Yes

○ No

Which of the following OSU CASNR social media platforms do you use? Check all that apply.

☐ Facebook

☐ LinkedIn

☐ Twitter

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
The academic information on the OSU CASNR Facebook site is useful.	○	○	○	○	○
I would use the OSU CASNR Facebook site to request information about upcoming activities.	○	○	○	○	○
I would seek the academic support (tutors, advising, etc.) I need from the OSU CASNR Facebook site.	○	○	○	○	○
The OSU CASNR Facebook site strengthens my personal connection to CASNR.	○	○	○	○	○
I find the OSU CASNR Facebook site easily accessible.	○	○	○	○	○
I would use the OSU CASNR Facebook site to request information about scholarships.	○	○	○	○	○
The OSU CASNR Facebook site answers all of my career-related (résumé critique, job postings, etc.) questions.	○	○	○	○	○

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

	Srongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
I would use the OSU CASNR LinkedIn site to request information about upcoming career-related activities.	○	○	○	○	○
The OSU CASNR LinkedIn site strengthens my personal connection to CASNR.	○	○	○	○	○
I find the OSU CASNR LinkedIn site easily accessible.	○	○	○	○	○
The OSU CASNR LinkedIn site answers some of my career-related (résumé critique, job postings, etc.) questions.	○	○	○	○	○

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
The academic information on the OSU CASNR Twitter site is useful.	○	○	○	○	○
I would use the OSU CASNR Twitter site to request information about upcoming activities.	○	○	○	○	○
I have access to the academic support (tutors, advising, etc.) I need from the OSU CASNR Twitter site.	○	○	○	○	○
The OSU CASNR Twitter site strengthens my personal connection to CASNR.	○	○	○	○	○
I find the OSU CASNR Twitter site easily accessible.	○	○	○	○	○
I would use the OSU CASNR Twitter site to request information about scholarships.	○	○	○	○	○
The OSU CASNR Twitter site answers all of my career-related (résumé critique, job postings, etc.) questions.	○	○	○	○	○

What would you want to see on an OSU CASNR social media platform? Check all that apply.

☐ Upcoming CASNR events

☐ Available internships

☐ Available jobs

☐ Information about scholarships

☐ News about production agriculture

☐ News about agricultural legislation

☐ Alumni events

☐ Alumni information

☐ Departmental fun facts

☐ College fun facts

☐ Club meeting information

☐ Tutoring / class work assistance

☐ Other

[   ]

VITA

Cody Wayne Cramer

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: SOCIAL MEDIA USES BY STUDENTS IN AN
AGRICULTURAL STUDENT ORIENTATION COURSE

Major Field: Agricultural Communications

Biographical:

Education:
Graduated from Norman High School, Norman, Oklahoma, in May 2007.

Received Bachelor of Science in Agribusiness - Marketing at Oklahoma
State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2011.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Agricultural
Communications at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in
May, 2013.

Experience:
Employed as prospective student graduate assistant for the College of
Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources from July 2011-June 2013.

Employed as photographer and photo assistant at Genessee Photo,
Stillwater, Oklahoma from May 2011-July 2011.

Served as a member of Homecoming Executive team for OSU Alumni
Association's "America's Greatest Homecoming Celebration" from
October 2009–October 2011.