

**Teach Ag Campaign's Use of Visuals on Facebook to Promote National Teach Ag Day**

Diane C. Meyer, B.S.  
Graduate Assistant  
Department of Agricultural Education and Communications  
Texas Tech University  
Box 42131, Lubbock, TX 79404  
P: (806) 834 – 6958  
Email: [diane.meyer@ttu.edu](mailto:diane.meyer@ttu.edu)

Jenna Holt-Day, B.S.  
Graduate Assistant  
Department of Agricultural Education and Communications  
Texas Tech University  
Box 42131, Lubbock, TX 79404  
P: (806) 834 – 8323  
E: [jenna.holt-day@ttu.edu](mailto:jenna.holt-day@ttu.edu)

Garrett M. Steede, M.S.  
Graduate Research Assistant  
Department of Agricultural Education and Communications  
Texas Tech University  
Box 42131, Lubbock, TX 79404  
P: (806) 834 – 7744  
E: [garrett.steede@ttu.edu](mailto:garrett.steede@ttu.edu)

Courtney Meyers, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor  
Department of Agricultural Education and Communications  
Texas Tech University  
Box 42131, Lubbock, TX 79404  
P: (806) 834 – 4364  
E: [courtney.meyers@ttu.edu](mailto:courtney.meyers@ttu.edu)

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### Introduction/Need for Research

Secondary agricultural education consistently struggles with teacher shortage, and the profession has focused efforts on ways to recruit and retain qualified teachers (Lemons, Brashears, Burris, Meyers, & Price, 2015). The National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE) established the National Council for Agricultural Education's Teach Ag Campaign as a recruitment and retention technique (NAAE, 2017). The Teach Ag Campaign hosts an annual National Teach Ag Day to promote awareness and involvement in the campaign. Agricultural educators and advocates participate in community activities and special lessons to highlight the importance of the profession. Social media are a powerful tool for disseminating preparatory and promotional information to event leaders. These tools also provide an easily-accessible platform for participants to share event activities in "real-time," which publicizes local events and shares the Teach Ag message (NAAE, 2017).

Social media platforms such as Facebook provide real-time engagement between organizational stakeholders (Guo & Saxton, 2012). Bortree and Seltzer (2009) found the most effective way for advocacy organizations to use Facebook is to post discussion-generating content that includes photos and videos on a regular basis. Jackson (2016) *recommended* using real-life photos and videos as a key strategy to improve engagement on Facebook. Visual elements provide the highest level of reader digestibility and retention. Rust, Rogers, and Joyce (2007) evaluated the effectiveness of health education materials and found visuals were an important element to educate patients. The authors suggested including images or videos to reinforce subjects, noting that images of people had a greater influence on information retention. The purpose of this study was to explore the role of visuals on the Teach Ag Facebook page. The specific research objectives were to 1) Identify the type of visuals used during the Teach Ag Day campaign and 2) Determine the level of social media engagement for each type of visual used.

### Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework was drawn from a study that evaluated the most engaging content in Facebook posts (Sabate, Berbegal-Mirabent, Cañabate, & Lebherz, 2014). In this study, images and videos were more popular than textual posts and images resulted in the highest engagement. Engagement was assessed on the number of likes and comments each post generated. King (2015) stated "more engagement means more likes, comments, and shares on posts" (p. 31). Facebook introduced "reactions" to Facebook posts in February 2016, which occurred after the two former studies were published. Therefore, this study measured engagement based on reactions, comments, and shares generated.

### Methods

The 2016 National Teach Ag Day was Thursday, Sept. 22. Posts from Sept. 12 to Sept. 30, 2016, were analyzed in this quantitative content analysis. This allowed for analysis of posts the week before and after, as well as the week of National Teach Ag Day. A total of 78 posts occurred during this period. Posts containing visual elements were identified and analyzed for their individual level of engagement. Using a researcher-developed codebook based on prior research (King, Meyers, Baker, & Doerfert, 2016), audience engagement was assessed on the number of reactions ("likes", "loves", "hahas", "wows", "sads", and "angrys"), shares, and comments each

post generated. After two coders established intercoder reliability, the data for this study were recorded in Excel then analyzed in SPSS.

### Results

Seventy percent ( $n = 55$ ) of posts within the time frame of the study contained a visual element. Five types of visuals were found in these posts: photographs, infographics, a combination of photos and infographics, logos, and videos. Photographs ( $n = 17$ ) were visuals featuring “real life” subjects. Infographics ( $n = 11$ ) represent text compiled into a graphic form. A combination ( $n = 5$ ) is a visual containing both photographs and infographic-like details. Logos ( $n = 17$ ) are symbols representing an organization. Videos ( $n = 5$ ) are live or recorded moving visual images. Videos had a range of 160 to 602 views, with a mean of 296 views ( $SD = 177.27$ ). The descriptive statistics of engagement for each visual type are shown below in Table 1. All reactions were positive (i.e. likes, loves, wows) so they were combined.

Table 1  
*Level of Engagement for Visual Types Used in 2016 National Teach Ag Day Facebook Content*

Visual Type	<i>n</i>	Reactions		Shares		Comments	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Photo	17	27.29	15.85	1.82	2.65	1.53	1.42
Logo	17	4.00	5.66	1.18	2.65	0.12	0.33
Infographic	11	7.55	4.67	1.73	1.55	0.73	0.79
Combination	5	15.60	8.50	1.20	1.64	0.80	0.84
Video	5	13.00	6.60	0.60	0.55	0.60	0.89
Total	55	13.78	13.87	1.44	2.23	0.78	1.08

### Conclusions, Implications & Recommendations

Visuals and graphics are important in engaging individuals. The data show photographs were most effective in audience engagement, as photos generated the highest overall engagement. Sabate et al. (2014) also found that photos had the highest level of engagement, which they attributed to the ease and quickness of digestion of photos. Logos resulted in the least engagement, although posted at the same frequency as photos. Logos were used when a link was in the Teach Ag posts. Links can negatively influence engagement because viewers need to visit an external page to view the content (Sabate et al., 2014). Videos and combination types were posted the least frequently, but resulted in higher overall engagement than posts containing infographics and logos.

The results of this study imply photographs are the most impactful visuals to include in social media posts regarding audience engagement. Those who provide content for Teach Ag should continue to post photographs on a regular basis and provide more videos. Finally, fewer logos should be used as they generated the least engagement and have the most potential to lead viewers away from the Facebook page. A limitation of this study is the small sample size. An additional study with a larger sample of Facebook content is necessary to further explore how visuals influence engagement rates.

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