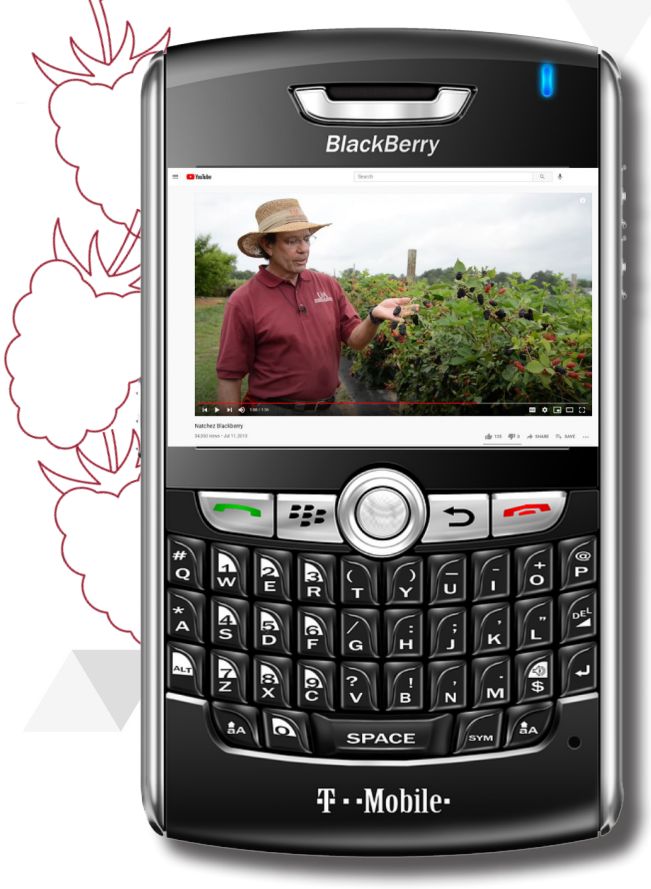

Juicy YouTube videos: Why some Extension blackberry breeding video shorts just seem sweeter

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Introduction

YouTube videos have become a staple in the Extension communications toolkit. YouTube video shorts—particularly 3- to 8-minute creations—have become especially useful due to the form's "higher levels of audience retention" (Langworthy, 2017, par. 5).

The University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture has recently had some success at educating clientele about blackberry varieties patented by the Arkansas Fruit Breeding Program. Some videos had significantly more views than others, despite their general content similarities, so an effort to identify the characteristics of the more successful videos was conceptualized.

Objective

The objective of this study was to analyze the characteristics of selected UA blackberry videos in terms of YouTube viewership statistics as well as in term of themes from previous literature regarding the use of YouTube in Extension education.

Conceptual Framework

One evaluation of Extension water conservation digital outreach resources demonstrated that YouTube video efforts generated more than ten times more views than a website dedicated to the same topic (Sutherin et al., 2015). Another showed a preference for 1-5 minute videos, which "allowed [audiences] to conceptualize the information, especially due to the combination of auditory and visual components" (Ramsay et al., 2012). Two important Extension-related research articles containing advice that has been frequently cited include Case and Hino's (2010) advice for self-producing Extension videos and Kinsey and Henneman's (2011) guidelines for developing viral online videos.

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Methods

Eight videos were selected to be analyzed based on their relatively high view count. The code book for the content analysis was developed from previous literature published on the use of videos and/or YouTube in educational or training situations. A single coder approach was employed using the code book (Liebrecht, 2021).

Analysis

Following a successful pilot study to confirm the usefulness of the codebook, the researchers used a hand-coded axial coding system (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to organize the codes and used frequency counts to help identify the most heavily coded themes occurring in the blackberry variety videos. The coding frequencies were then compared to the viewership counts, and this comparison constituted the main findings of the study.

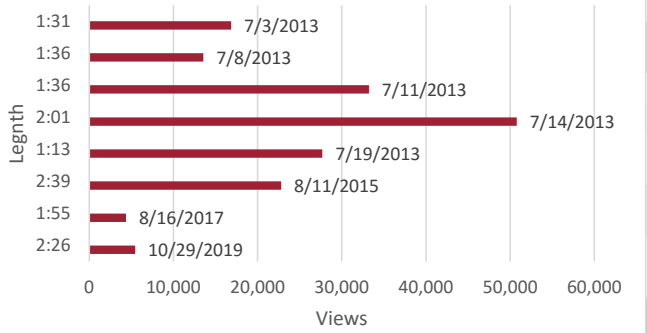
Results

Five videos were posted within 16 days of each other in July 2013, while the other three videos were published in August 2015, August 2017, and October 2019. The range of views and length can be seen in Figure 1.

The video with the highest number of views was the fourth out of five videos published in July 2013, and it is the third longest video in the group.

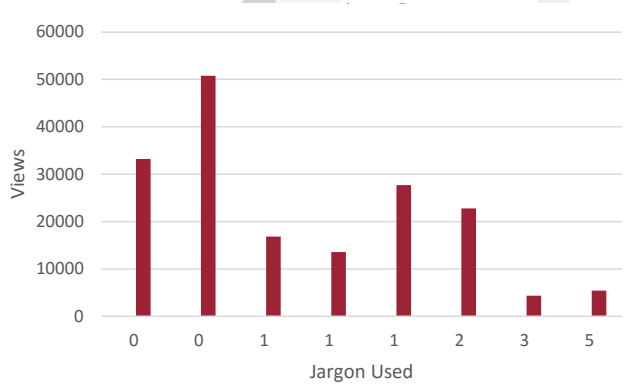
The video with the least number of views was published in August 2017, making it the second youngest video.

Figure 1
Number of views by length and date published



Note. Views are from the date the videos were coded in August 2020.

Figure 2
Number of views by instances of jargon used



Note. Views are from the date the videos were coded in August 2020.

Conclusions/Discussion

It can be concluded that educational videos on YouTube benefit, in terms of views, from defining jargon or avoiding its use altogether, and from embedding or linking to it in at least one location online.

The blackberry variety videos analyzed tended to follow recommendations from previous literature. Case & Hino (2010) suggested planning for access by embedding the video or posting the link in multiple places. All but two videos followed this convention, including the most frequently viewed videos. In this collection of blackberry videos, it appears that those with more recommended elements, such as no jargon and more comments, had a higher number of views without being embedded or linked.

The use of jargon was linked with decreased views, as seen in Figure 2. Additionally, the number of comments influences a video's ranking in the internal YouTube algorithm, which affects a video's likelihood of showing up in a search on YouTube (Cooper, 2020).

Recommendations

Avoiding technical jargon and making efforts to drive traffic to the videos through external linking and embedding are important practices. Responding to comments on videos might have an effect on views as well because it may increase the video's ranking.

To further support strategic planning of Extension video efforts, more research on improving engagement through comments on the YouTube channel is warranted as well. Concepts that appeared important but were outside the focus of this study included the influence of preparation and analyzing the analytics available to the channel owner on the number of views. Further studies exploring how different styles of preparation influence Extension education video views are recommended as well.

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