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## Introduction

As the distance between producer and consumer widens, strategic communication will be key in the success of the agricultural industry (Doerfert, 2011).

High school agricultural educators are in a unique position as they fill both the role of educator and communicator, all while striving to prepare their students with vital career skills for success after graduation (The National Council for Agricultural Education, 2018).

The objective of this study was to determine the various communication channels currently utilized by agricultural educators in Arkansas and their audiences.

## Conceptual/Theoretical Framework

Research involving Roger's diffusion of innovation theory examines how practices, ideas or beliefs are spread and adopted.

With the varying communication channels, audiences have numerous ways to receive information.

Effective communication requires engagement, confidence, and established relationships with an audience (Nisbet & Scheufele, 2009).

The need for connection in communication has led to the implementation of diffusion of innovation and opinion leaders.

The opinion leader's ability to receive and then share information with their various publics of influence helps connect reliable sources with audiences (Nisbet & Scheufele, 2009).

Table 1

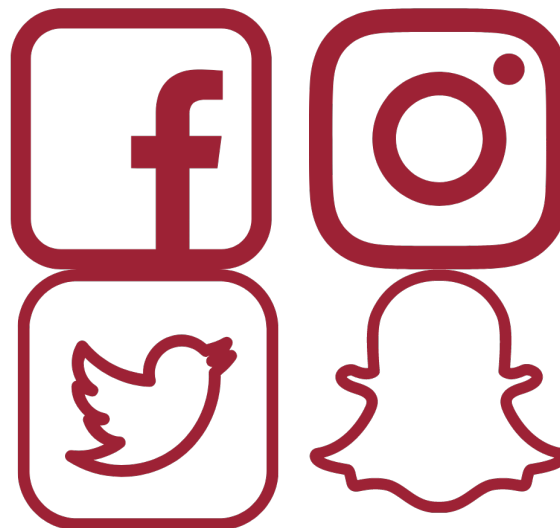
*Social Media Channels Utilized by Arkansas Agricultural Educators*

Social Media Channels	<i>f</i>	%
Facebook	85	91.4
Instagram	44	47.3
Twitter	11	11.8
YouTube	4	4.3
Pinterest	0	0.0
Snapchat	5	5.4
Linked-In	1	1.1
Blog	1	1.1

*N*=93

## Methodology

This study followed a quantitative research design with 283 Arkansas agricultural teachers surveyed. A response rate of 40% was achieved with 93 completed survey responses. Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted using SAS© 9.4.



## Results/Findings

Communication Channels

Local Newspaper

84.9% (*f*=79) had access | 66.7% (*f*=62) utilized

Local Radio

67.7% (*f*=63) had access | 27.9% (*f*=26) utilized

Local Television

25.8% (*f*=24) had access | 4.3% (*f*=4) utilized

Table 1 contains social media channels used by Arkansas Agricultural Educators

Educators engaged the most with parents, administration, & students

Educators engaged the least with their communities, alumni/ boosters, & State FFA staff

## Conclusions/Recommendations

Shifts in communication channels was recognized.

Educators communicated least (throughout all platforms) with their communities, alumni/boosters and State FFA directors.

Further research:

- Investigate the relationship between access to communication channels, and preferred communication channels.
- Explore the necessary competencies of agricultural educators in relation to communication efforts.

The results of this study imply Arkansas agricultural educators need further preparation to utilize communication channels to better engage constituents.