

**Talking about Diddly Squat: A Content Analysis of Tweets about Clarkson's Farm**

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### Introduction

The documentary series, *Clarkson's Farm*, premiered on Amazon Prime in June 2021. The series highlighted the exploits of Jeremy Clarkson, a television presenter, in the first year of taking over managing his 1,000 acre *Diddly Squat Farm* in the United Kingdom (Whitehead, 2021). The eight episodes highlighted agriculture as Clarkson learned about farming through trial and error and his small team of advisers (Whitehead, 2021). After its debut, *Clarkson's Farm* received positive feedback for the realistic representation of agricultural life. However, agriculture and rural life are not always depicted realistically or positively, with television shows often reinforcing stereotypes (Craig, 2019; Fountaine & Bulmer, 2022; Lundy et al., 2007; Specht & Beam, 2015). Given that television shows influence the perception of agriculture and rural life (Fountaine & Bulmer, 2022; Lundy et al., 2007), we sought to understand the Twitter discourse focusing on *Clarkson's Farm*.

### Theoretical Framework

This study was grounded in the theory of narrative persuasion. As audiences consume media, such as television and literature, they are influenced by the narratives depicted, which include the setting, structure, and implied or explicit messages (Braddock & Dillard, 2016). These narratives influence audience beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. Additionally, using social media has provided opportunities for audiences to connect with narratives through social television or live tweeting. This phenomenon creates a public experience as individuals watch a show and they share their thoughts and feelings via social media (Lin et al., 2016). The effects of social television on those participating include neurological engagement through emotion, memory, and attention (Nielsen, 2015). Social television viewing is also connected to higher levels of incidental learning, especially among younger viewers (Nee & Dozier, 2017).

### Methods

A quantitative content analysis was completed to answer the research question, what are Twitter users commenting about the television show *Clarkson's Farm* in the first six months after it aired on Amazon Prime? A systematic thematic analysis was utilized through inductive coding to identify categories to guide the content analysis. Twitter was selected due to the relation to social television and audiences sharing their thoughts about the series as they watch. Researchers used the social media monitoring tool, Meltwater, to collect tweets related to *Clarkson's Farm* between June 10, 2021-November 20, 2021, from the day the show debuted to six months after. The search query included show-related terms of "Clarkson, Diddly Squat, farm, Kaleb, sheep, tractor." There were 19,521 collected tweets, with 2,228 of those tweets originating in the United States and therefore selected for analysis in this study due to the researchers' location and background.

The selected tweets were downloaded into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, and a random sample of 378 tweets was selected for analysis. Three members of the research team developed a code book to categorize tweets by coding the same tweets in a 10% sample to understand the data (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). The research team developed four categories: entertainment value, education about or appreciation towards agriculture and rural life, conflict value, and logistics of the show. Intercoder reliability was determined based on the initial randomized 10% sample of tweets ( $n = 38$ ) which was not used for the main analysis (Riffe et al., 2019). Intercoder reliability was measured using Fleiss' kappa between the three coders. The kappa value of .644

denotes a “good” strength of agreement (Altman, 1999). The three coders then split the sample evenly and coded using the established codebook. Six tweets were removed from the sample due to lack of relevance in the study for a final sample of 374 tweets.

### Results

Frequencies were analyzed for each category of tweet using SPSS. The frequency of content themes in tweets about *Clarkson’s Farm* ( $N = 374$ ) is displayed in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Frequency of content themes in tweets about Clarkson’s Farm (N = 374)*

| Codes  | Frequencies | Percent |
|--|-------------|---------|
| Entertainment value  | 170         | 45.5    |
| Education about or appreciation towards agriculture and rural life | 90          | 24.1    |
| Logistics of the show  | 79          | 21.2    |
| Conflict value   | 35          | 9.4     |

The majority of the tweets focused on *entertainment value* ( $n = 170$ , 45.5%). The tweets in this category related to the enjoyment and humor of the show. Approximately a quarter of tweets ( $n = 90$ , 24.1%) referred to *education about or appreciation towards rural life*. These tweets highlighted the information they learned about agriculture or positivity towards the representation of rural life. *Show logistics* ( $n = 79$ , 21.1%), representing approximately 20% of the tweets, included viewers curious about the second season of the show or mentioned the farm store or filming locations. The least frequent category was *conflict value* ( $n = 35$ , 9.4%) or tweets indicating negative comments towards Clarkson and the farm store.

### Conclusions

The results of this study indicate a positive attitude towards *Clarkson’s Farm* and how agriculture and rural life are displayed in the first sixth months after it debuted, with the majority of tweets falling into the categories of *entertainment value* or *education about or appreciation towards agriculture and rural life*. As the average consumer continues to be less cognizant of how food is produced, entertainment programs like *Clarkson’s Farm* provide awareness of agricultural practices in a realistic manner, which is not common in television programming (Lundy et al., 2007; Specht & Beam, 2015). Using social viewing (i.e., live-tweeting) on such programs can increase awareness of essential issues and the amount of learning (Nee & Dozier, 2017). Researchers should continue to explore the influence of *Clarkson’s Farm* and other agriculturally-focused television shows to study audience reactions and what they learn from the shows (Winter et al., 2018). For example, focus groups with *Clarkson’s Farm* viewers could provide a deeper knowledge of what they learned or appreciated about agriculture and rural life.

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