



Introduction

- Influence is the force a person employs to enact a change in a target individual by altering their opinion, attitude, or behavior toward a certain product, idea, or concept (Hall & Barret, 2007).
- Individuals who use social media as a channel for influence or advocacy have been coined as influencers (Carpenter & Bonin, 2020).
- Influence is directly related to how much trust is formed between influencers and their followers (Shank, 2022).
- As social media platforms like Instagram are widely used among university students, influence is a necessary topic of research for agricultural influencers to utilize when advocating for agriculture.

Theoretical Framework

- Today's society cannot be imagined without the presence of social communication media (Mehrad & Yousefi, 2018).
- The way people receive information is greatly influenced by social media; so much so that there is a co-dependency between the media platforms and the media consumers (Roese, 2018).
- The theoretical framework that guided this study was the Media-Systems Dependency Theory conceptualized by Ball-Rokech and DeFleur (1976) which explains the overall relationship between media and the people, and how media affects audience behavior.

Purpose and Objectives

- The purpose of this study was to identify student perceptions of influence through agricultural Instagram posts after receiving instruction about advocacy.
- This study was a one-group, pretest-posttest quantitative design (Campbell & Stanley, 1963) that used two Qualtrics questionnaires to collect data from college-age students with six weeks (12 units) of advocacy-related instruction between the data collections.

R01: Determine how student's perceptions of influence in agriculture-related Instagram post changed after receiving instruction about advocacy.

R02: Determine what characteristics of the post they used to make that determination.

R03: Determine if a student's background affect their level of perceived influence.

Methodology

- Study participants were recruited from an undergraduate agricultural advocacy course at Texas Tech University.
- Participation was voluntary with 67% of the students completing the two questionnaires. Participants rank-ordered Instagram post screen captures of 16 agricultural advocates in 10 states located identified through snowball sampling.
- Following their ranking, students were asked to describe the factors that led to their top and bottom post rankings.
- Students also responded to demographic questions. Data analysis included the use of descriptive statistics being calculated. For the open-ended questions, thematic analysis techniques were used.

Findings

- Nearly **57 percent (56.25%)** of the Instagram posts changed in their ranking following the advocacy instruction. The greatest changes in rankings resulted in a five-placing decline and a three-placing increase.
- Influencing characteristics emerging from the student comments were: **(a) relatability to post; (b) captions with facts; (c) use of comprehensible pictures.**
- Findings suggested an agricultural background **does affect** the level of perceived influence of agricultural advocates.

Conclusions

- Instruction in advocacy-related topics may have impacted perceptions of influence in agriculture-related Instagram posts.
- Perception of the influence of Instagram posts is impacted when posts are relatable, when the captions state facts, and when images are easily consumed and understood.
- Having an agricultural background may also impact perceptions of influence in related Instagram posts.

Implications/Recommendations

- The results illustrate the potential of instruction changing perceptions of content gained via Instagram social media posts.
- The results also indicated that both content and imagery are considered by college-age students when determining the quality of an Instagram post.
- Related to Kim and Yung's 2016 study, this could impact how a user of Instagram may share agriculture content with others as well as the development of agriculture-related social media posts.



Student Perceptions of Influence Emerging from Agricultural Influencer Instagram Posts

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