

**UTILIZING SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION PLATFORMS AS A
RECRUITMENT STRATEGY FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL
SCIENCES AT WEST TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY**

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this descriptive study was to evaluate the uses of social media as a recruiting strategy that is or will be employed by the Department of Agricultural Sciences at West Texas A&M University. The target population of this study consisted of first year freshman and transfer students that are enrolled in the department (N=273). The survey instrument was administered through e-mail to the participants who fell within the target population. In order to achieve the purpose of this study, data was collected via Qualtrics. There were 273 surveys administered with 68 completed and submitted. The instrument was designed to measure students own personal social media usage, the purpose of the social media sites, and the development of effectiveness within the Department of Agricultural Sciences own social media platforms. Respondents were asked a series of multiple choice questions, some that had the ability to provide multiple answers, yes/no questions, and ratings.

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CHAPTER I

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

1.1 Uses of Social Media

With the growth and change of Web 2.0, or the so-called second generation of communities that are web-based, social networking sites have become increasingly popular (Bosch, 2009). Web 2.0 technologies, applications and tools, are easier to use, friendlier, free to use and “easy to (re)build and among them there are the most known wikis, blogs, social networks, etc., day by day we are becoming more technological literate and more confident about our skills in using such kind of technologies and applications” (Malita, 2010, Pgs. 747-748). “Web 2.0 was a term first used in 2004 to describe a new way in which software developers and end-users started to utilize the World Wide Web.” This platform gave way to the development of social media because the applications were not changed by individualized users, but by all users in a collaborative fashion (Kaplan, 2009). Social media comprises of activities that involve socializing and networking online through words, pictures and videos. Social Media is redefining how we relate to each other as humans and how we are as humans relate to the

organizations that serve us. It is about dialog- two way discussions bringing people together to discover and share information (Solis 2008). Jason Falls, co-founder of the Social Media Club, asked twitter followers to explain social media in two words or less. Some of those descriptions included community, interaction, and relationship building. (Rueben, 2008).

Fred Cavazza, a french consultant that specializes in new media, developed a ten-categorical break down, or “Social Media Landscape”, that engages and translates the forms of publication tools, sharing tools, discussion tools, social networks, micro publication tools, social aggregation tools, livecast, virtual worlds, social gamming and massively multiplayer online gaming. (Reuben, 2008). Along with Fred Cavazza’s development of a categorical system, Brian Solis, the co-founder of the Social Media Club and leader in Social media thought, introduced “The Conversation Prism,” (Reuben 2008) where he described it as “the art of listening, learning and sharing” (Solis 2008). Social media development is highly focused on added communication lines along with relationship building. Although social media is not a face-to-face, two-way interaction; there is a two-way interaction that occurs. “Social media employ mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms via which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content” (Kietzmann, 2011, Pg. 241). These social media sites are also extremely active and fast-moving. That means that what is up-to-date today could disappear from the virtual landscape tomorrow. The current trend that moves towards social media can be seen as a way back to the Internet’s roots, since it re-transforms the Internet to what it was initially created for: a

platform to facilitate information exchange between users (Kietzmann, 2011). As the availability of high speed internet began to grow, the online networks gained an added amount of popularity which lead to the concept of creating social network sites such as Facebook in 2004 (Kaplan, 2009).

1.2. Branding

“A university’s brand is a manifestation of the institution’s features that distinguish it from others, reflect its capacity to satisfy students’ needs, engender trust in its ability to deliver a certain type and level of a higher education, and help potential recruits to make wise enrollment decisions” (Bennett, 2009). Branding is a term that is heavily defined and unique within the involvement of companies and higher institutions of learning. A brand can be a definition of promise of attributes that someone buys. These attributes may be illusory or real, have rational or strictly emotional, and could have evidence of tangibility or none. (Bennett, 2009). Another definition of a brand is that it “mainly consists of (a) a collection of promises presented to the outside world concerning the brand’s benefits (brand as “covenant”), (b) a set of distinctive features that define the brand’s inherent nature and reality (the brand’s quiddity), and (c) an assortment of aesthetic designations and external communications that describe the brand (the brand’s symbolic and external representation)” (Bennett, 2009, Pg. 87). Figure 1 suggests the three components of branding with covenant, quiddity and symbolic and external representation. These components collectively make up what the branding model means. (Bennett, 2009). With the dissection of the model, branding becomes complicated in

respect to each area of focus. The university brand is broken down into three components: quiddity, covenant, and symbolic and external representation. All have influential and consequential components to the branding of a university.

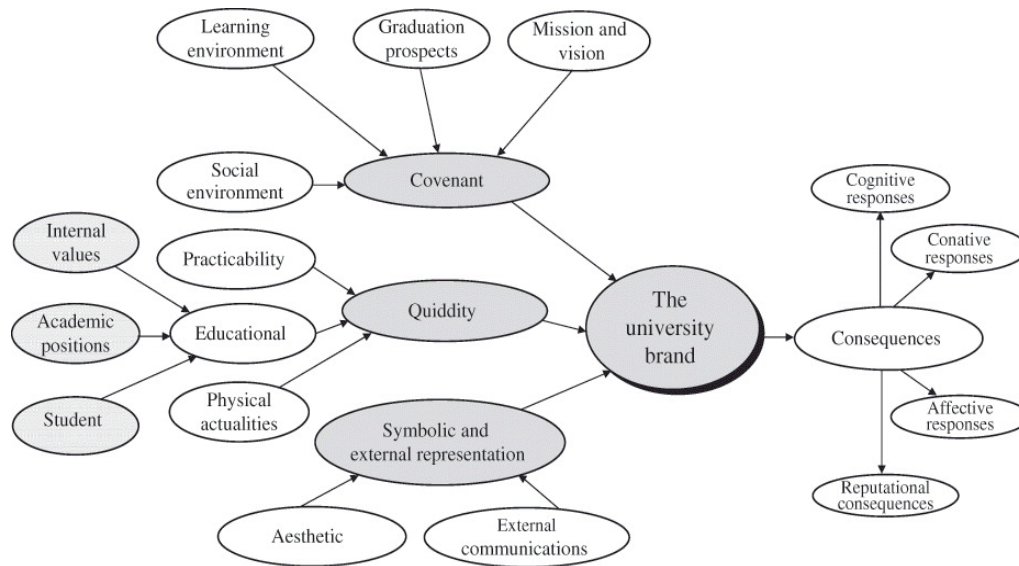


Figure 1.1 Bennet (2009) prospective students' perceptions of university brand

Bennet and Ali-Choundhury (2009) concluded that covenant or promises that a university brand supplies was the most important component. “Critical dimensions of covenant included a person’s prospects on graduation and the institution’s learning environment (especially arrangements for student support) and social environment” (Bennett, 2009, Pg. 97). These matters should be emphasized on the marketing communication side for the intention to develop a university’s brand (Bennett, 2009). A conclusion was also found that “logos were not reported to convey meaningful messages

concerning ‘what the university is.’” Furthermore, “quiddity and covenant exerted heavier influences on conative responses than did the marketing communications activities embodied in symbolic and external representation” (Bennett, 2009, Pg. 97).

Rutter, Roper and Lettice (2016) researched the use of social media with interaction towards the university brand and recruitment. The research was focused on social media, specifically Twitter. It was aimed to test the relationship between higher education recruitment and it’s performance and the variables that social media has in that. The results showed with a higher number of followers on Twitter comes a strong predictor of student recruitment success along with the idea that the followers represent “brand strength or the reputation of the university brand” (Pg.3101). However, the research that was demonstrated explains that “the use of social media alone is not necessarily a positive branding activity for universities” (Rutter, 2016, Pg.3101). Although stated that social media alone is not a positive branding activity, it does benefit branding when the university uses social media interactively (Hall-Phillips, Park, Chung, Anaza, & Rathod, 2015). This research shows that if universities begin to foster relationships with their consumers, then social media begins to become a higher success. It is shown that consumers follow brands they like and that causes an endorsement to occur. Whenever an endorsement is fostered, a relationship occurs. “The added benefit of forming and developing those relationships within social media is that the communications are public and easily taken up by others” (Rutter, 2016, Pg. 3101). Since communication lines are public and easily accessible, more consumers see the brand or endorsement and there is further interaction within the brand itself.

Paul Temple (2011) claimed branding is not what it's perceived as. He states that it is more of an illusion, for corporations and businesses. Temple (2011) moves forward to state, "in most cases the empirical evidence here can be explained by simple name recognition, and by customers knowing (or thinking they know) something about the product itself" (Pg. 115). University branding has begun to change and become de-valued because branding and reputation are two different entities, but have become linked together. University brand and reputation are different since anyone can add or take away from a university by simply criticizing the reputation of that institution. The brand is carried on throughout the students who represent and attend that institution. Temple stated branding "is what people come to think about a university as a result of what it does and what its staff and students have achieved over the years; it is slow to change and comes from inside" (Pg. 116). With branding being a factor that moves from the inside out and back again, universities need to take into consideration the strength their brand can carry for future recruiting.

1.3 Social Media Recruitment Strategies

There is a growing emphasis on the University's role to increase more commercial language and to use the practice of branding and brand management (Rutter, 2016). There is an influence that social media, with branding involved, has a higher education target known as student recruitment. The impact of traditional communication to social media has an emphasis on leads for positive outcomes for a brand. The emphasis is focused on a co-creation of contentment "between consumers and brands, and enables

brands to reach new customers” (Pg. 3096) However, research does suggest that brands become unsure of social media management and the strategy of focus and in turn the positive contentment for brand identification is unachieved (Rutter, 2016).

Alessandri, Yang, and Kinsey (2006) researched the integrative approach to university visual identity and reputation. The focus of the research was to focus on concepts of university identity and reputation within private universities. This research found with brand knowledge and recruitment in mind that “rather than using on specific visual aid to brand the university... efficacy of using varying images depending on the audience being addressed” (Alessandri, 2006, Pg. 269). On a more practical level for universities, this idea shows a positive image for colleges and universities to develop new branding initiatives and have a stronger visual identity campaign. “Rather than constrain the campaign with a specific graphical element meant to speak to large general audience[s], colleges and universities can employ a variety of graphical elements that truly speak to a smaller, segmented audience” (Alessandri, 2006, Pg. 269). With the idea that universities can target smaller, more segmented audiences, this gives the branding and recruitment campaigns a flexibility to begin to reach a target audience (Alessandri, 2006).

With a target audience in mind, research has shown that universities who interact with that target audience, employs more followers and then achievement of a successful student recruitment performance begins to occur. The universities who fail to interact with their audience on promotional social media sites have a potential to fail and lose potential students. A shift from an emphasis on traditional brand communication to the

use of social media can lead to positive outcomes, due to the co-creation of content between consumers and brands, and the social media enables brands to reach new consumers (Rutter, 2016).

“Colleges and universities are beginning to embrace social media and realizing the potential power and implications for using it as a component of their overall marketing mix” (Reuben, 2008, Pg. 1). Social networking is one aspect of social media, where individuals are in communities that share ideas, interests, or are looking to meet people with similar ideas and interests (Reuben, 2008). With the embrace of social media, there should not be a surprise that it has changed the landscape of college admissions. Since the current generations have been exposed to the Internet since childhood, these generations are known as the “wired generations.” This world has become interconnected and has a hyper-communication that fundamentally changed how teenagers and young adults perceive, process and act on information. The University of Massachusetts Dartmouth Center for Marketing Research had conducted a study over the usage of their social media by college admissions offices (Mattson, 2009). The conclusion was that “colleges and universities are using social media to recruit and research prospective students. It is clear that online behavior can have important consequences for young people and that social networking sites can, and will, be utilized by others to make decisions about them” (Mattson, 2009, Pg. 2). There is evidence that schools have enthusiasm and eagerness to embrace these new online communication tools, but there is also evidence that suggests these tools are powerful (Mattson, 2009). The full impact and utilization of the social media potential is not there.

Universities need to consider having a focal point for parents as well. Recruitment comes in all forms, and recruiting parents is just as important as recruiting the student. The social media for the university or college should have a user-friendly effect, and a target audience. “For students and their parents looking to have a conversation online about particular aspects of university life, this increased interaction through comments can be significant. With more and more schools moving into multiple channels of social media, schools that don’t allow for conversation will quickly be passed up” (Mattson, 2009, Pg. 6).

It is not enough for universities and colleges to have social media, but these platforms need to have a welcoming, and interactive set up for a target audience. Whether that target audience is future students, current students, or parents, and interaction needs to occur. Universities need to also realize that social media is not an afterthought in the world of recruitment. There should be a level of expectance to spend between 1-10 hours a week using the social media. The amount of time spent depends on the number of social platforms the university has, how active the audience is, and how extensive of a presence the university wants to have (Reuben, 2008). If colleges and universities are willing to commit to a social media presence then there should be a time commitment. “Participation is no longer an option as social media isn’t a spectator sport” (Solis, 2008). Universities cannot use social media as a part time option for recruitment, there needs to be commitment to use social media.

As social media sites gain popularity, there is an opportunity for higher institutions to take time and make a commitment to the platforms they desire. Social

networking can be a great resource for recruitment efforts and could be a very beneficial part to the recruitment program (Noel-Levitz, 2007). Universities and colleges should consider social media because social media gives institutions the opportunity to humanize stories of students and alumni. Those stories can create a loyalty and earn not only respect for the university but even future business (Solis, 2008).

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CHAPTER II

UTILIZING SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION PLATFORMS AS A RECRUITMENT STRATEGY FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES AT WEST TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

2.1. Abstract

The purpose of this descriptive study was to evaluate the uses of social media as a recruiting strategy that is or could be employed by the Department of Agricultural Sciences at West Texas A&M University. The target population of this study consisted of first-year freshmen and transfer students that are enrolled in the department ($n=273$). The survey instrument was administered through e-mail to the participants who fell within the target population. In order to achieve the purpose of this study, data was collected via Qualtrics. There were 273 surveys administered with 68 respondents that completed and submitted the survey instrument. The instrument was designed to measure students' own personal social media usage, the purpose of the social media sites, and the development of effectiveness within the Department of Agricultural Sciences own social media platforms. Respondents were asked a series of multiple choice questions, some that had the ability to provide multiple answers, yes/no questions, and ratings.

2.2. Introduction

As social media moves from ‘buzz word’ status to strategic tool, it will become apparent that universities need to keep up with the changing times (Eyrich, Padman & Sweetser, 2008). Recruitment is key to attracting potential new students and is important especially since social media has been integrated widely into society (Eyrich, Padman and Sweetser). The Department of Agricultural Sciences at West Texas A&M University utilizes recruitment as a mechanism to continue to raise enrollment numbers, knowing that recruitment aids in finding and keeping potential students. One of the department’s goals is to seek out hard working, dedicated agriculture students that are willing to become involved within the department and by doing so, they continue to maintain competitive teams, and develop growing degree programs. As the department continues to grow, the recruitment strategies begin to change. Examples of current recruitment strategies are face-to-face interactions with faculty and potential students, FFA events, and junior college and high school visits (Gammill, 2016). Also, included in these recruitment strategies are mail outs that provide information on the department and degrees available.

The department has its traditional recruitment strategies that continue to be successful, but as the target audience of first-year students begins to change, it is necessary that the recruitment strategies incorporate the new trends of communication through social media.

2.2.1. Statement of the Problem

The Department of Agricultural Sciences emphasizes, largely, on recruitment strategies and as the current recruitment strategies are continuing to be successful the shift to social media is a focal point to analyze for future recruiters. “Given the tremendous exposure of social media in the popular press today, it would seem that we are in the midst of an altogether new communication landscape” (Kietzmann, 2011, Pg. 241). Social media is a communication channel among society today, universities need to keep up with the demand by allowing recruitment to be heavily involved both over social media communication lines and face-to-face. The presence of the university “brand” online could become a crucial aspect in the following years for enrollment.

Several North-American universities (as well as employers) have begun to use their website to recruit or dismiss candidates (Torgeson, 2006). By following other universities’, West Texas A&M University, more specifically, the Department of Agricultural Sciences can keep up with the changing communication lines and integrate them into the recruitment strategies that are currently in use. The focal point is not if social media should be used but it is narrowing down the specific social media platforms that needs to have more emphasis over others.

2.2.2. Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to gain information about personal social media use and the social media platforms that the Department uses from first-year students in the Department of Agricultural Sciences at West Texas A&M University. The study was

used to determine what social media platform students expose themselves more frequently to, and which medium provides a more informational base for communication.

The objectives for this study were as follows:

1. Identify the basic social media behaviors that students partake in on a regular basis.
2. Individually identify the importance of each social media platform as it pertains to use to better understand how social media is of importance in University recruitment.
3. Compare the four different media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter) as they relate to primary purpose among students.
4. Identify the role that the Department of Agricultural Sciences social media plays in conjunction with recruitment of future students.
5. Identify the demographics of the participants in this study.

2.2.3. Definition of Terms

For this study, the following terms were defined in order to help the reader better understand this study.

Communication- information communicated, information transmitted or conveyed; a verbal or written message.

Communications, plural form, a technique of expressing ideas effectively, the technology of the transmission of information (as by print or telecommunication)

(Dictionary by Merriam-Webster).

Social Media- forms of electronic communication (as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (as videos) (Dictionary by Merriam-Webster).

Recruitment- the process of adding new individuals to a population or subpopulation (Dictionary by Merriam-Webster).

Web 2.0- describe a new way in which software developers and end-users started to utilize the World Wide Web; continuously modified by all users in a participatory and collaborative fashion (Dictionary by Merriam-Webster).

SNS- Social Networking Sites (Correa, 2009).

2.2.4. Assumptions

While conducting this study, the researcher can assume that all survey questions were answered honestly and to the best of the participants' ability. Also, it was assumed that the target audience was in fact first-year freshmen and transfer students, all pursuing a degree in agriculture. It was also assumed that all were still agriculture majors at the time the survey was administered and completed.

2.2.5. Significance of Study

As social media becomes a potential power for a different approach to marketing within colleges and universities, it is important that recruitment strategies begin to incorporate social media (Reuben, 2008). The most effective mediums need to be established to continue to provide a satisfactory recruitment both face-to-face and online.

The results of this study will be used to determine which social media platforms is more suitable for the Department of Agricultural Sciences regarding recruitment. The Department of Agricultural Sciences at West Texas A&M University has two out of the four social media mediums: Facebook and Instagram.

2.3. Methods and Materials

2.3.1. Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to gain information about personal social media use and the social media platforms that the Department uses from first-year students in the Department of Agricultural Sciences at West Texas A&M University. The study will be used to determine which social media medium that students expose themselves more frequently to, and which medium provides a more informational base for communication. The objectives for this study were as follows:

1. Identify the basic social media behaviors that students partake in on a regular basis.

2. Individually identify the importance of each social media platform as it pertains to use to better understand how social media is of importance in University recruitment.
3. Compare the four different media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter) as they relate to primary purpose among students.
4. Identify the role that the Department of Agricultural Sciences social media plays in conjunction with recruitment of future students.
5. Identify the demographics of the participants in this study.

2.3.2. Design

The researcher used a descriptive survey research method for this study. This method was used to describe the efficiency of recruitment through social media mediums. This was measured by students describing their personal social media usage and then identifying factors related to social media that would influence recruitment within the Department of Agricultural Sciences own social media pages.

2.3.3. Population

The target population of this study consisted first-year freshmen and transfer, undergraduate students, enrolled, in the Department of Agricultural Sciences at West Texas A&M University during the Fall semester. Potential participants were identified from a data specialist at WTAMU. The frame was obtained Monday, March 6, 2017, via Excel spreadsheet shared by e-mail from an information specialist. The frame only

contained e-mail addresses for the population consisting of 273 students. Generalization to other populations should not occur. The results from this population cannot be inferred to any other population.

2.3.4. Instrument

The survey instrument was created as a tool to determine social media behaviors among students, to determine the role those mediums play in daily life. The questionnaire was also used to determine if social media is of any influence during the recruitment purposes for the Department of Agricultural Sciences. The survey was completed on voluntary basis by the students whom received the survey link via e-mail. The students could exit the survey without completing at any given time by exiting the window browser containing the instrument.

The first section of the instrument consisted of questions determining the students' demographics. Gender, age, current major, and classification were acquired.

The second section contained questions to determine a student's personal social media usage. These questions included if current social media was used, what social media platforms, the amount of time on social media during one day, the advertisements shown on personal sites, and the time of day in which social media is utilized the most. The answers were based on "yes/no" selection or on multiple choice questions, some requiring only one answer where others provided multiple answers.

The third section of the survey instrument contained questions over a specific social media platform. The social platform utilized was Facebook. The answers were

obtained through multiple choice questions, some requiring only one answer where others provided multiple answers, and a ranking system of 1 to 3, 1 being the most viewed and 3 being the least viewed.

The fourth section of the questionnaire contained questions over a specific social media platform. The social platform utilized was Instagram. The answers were obtained through multiple choice questions, some requiring only one answer where others provided multiple answers, and a ranking system of 1 to 3, 1 being the most viewed and 3 being the least viewed.

Section five contained questions over a specific social media medium. The social platform utilized was Snapchat. The answers were obtained through multiple choice questions, some requiring only one answer where others provided multiple answers, and a ranking system of 1 to 3, 1 being the most viewed and 3 being the least viewed.

The sixth section of the instrument contained questions over a specific social media medium. The social platform utilized was Twitter. The answers were obtained through multiple choice questions, some requiring only one answer where others provided multiple answers, and a ranking system of 1 to 3, 1 being the most viewed and 3 being the least viewed.

The seventh section of the instrument was used to obtain overall information about the social media platforms. The answers were based in a ranking scale of 1 to 4, 1 being the favorite and 4 being the least, as compared to the four mediums. The answers consisted of the most and least favorite platform, information as a primary use,

entertainment, shopping, and social aspects of the social media platforms that were presented.

The eighth, and final section of the survey instrument was targeted at the Department of Agricultural Sciences social media pages and how influential they are to the current student. If students were not aware that the department was present on a social media platform, then all answers chosen were “N/A”. Answers were a combination of “yes/no”, multiple choice that would allow multiple answers, and a Likert scale as well as one open-ended question. The descriptors of the five-point satisfaction experience while using the Department’s Social Media were as follows (1) Very Satisfied, (2) Somewhat Satisfied, (3) Neutral, (4) Somewhat Dissatisfied, and (5) Very Dissatisfied.

2.3.5. Validity and Reliability

Once the survey was developed, there was a review and edit process by a Panel of Experts, two different professors from the Department of Agricultural Sciences. Changes were made based on recommendations from the two. The Institutional Review Board required a preview and final review of the survey, and was approved on March 6, 2017, #04-01-17.

A pilot test was distributed amongst five undergraduate students that would not be a part of the study. One of the sections of the survey instrument were edited in order to give questions a better understanding to the participants who the instrument was distributed too.

2.3.6. Data Collection

The survey was administered via e-mails to all first-year freshmen and transfer students. The survey was sent out on Tuesday, March 14, 2017 at 12:00 noon, Tuesday, March 28th at 1:30 p. m., and Tuesday, April 11th at 3:45 p. m. All surveys were sent out during normal, school-hours. The method of distribution was based on Dillman's survey method (Dillman, 1978). In the e-mail with the link to the survey provided, the purpose of the study and the statement that the survey was optional and confidential was included before the actual link. The statement also included that no compensation for participation would be granted. A total of 273 e-mails were sent out to the target audience of first-year freshmen and transfer students.

Seventy surveys were started and 68 surveys were completed and submitted into the Qualtrics online database, where each response was reviewed and saved. The response rate for this research was 24.90%. The data was then exported to a Microsoft Excel document where each answer was recorded.

2.3.7. Data Analysis

Data was exported from the Qualtrics online database to a Microsoft Excel document. Data was analyzed using Windows™ Microsoft Excel program on a PC and Macintosh, and the SPSS statistical package on a Macintosh platform. If a participant marked 'N/A' as an answer, that response was not recorded, as it could not give feedback. For the objectives of this study, means and standard deviations, along with percentages were used for description of the data. Generalization to other populations

should not occur. The results from this population cannot be inferred to any other population.

2.4. Results and Discussions

2.4.1. Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to gain information from first-year students in the Department of Agricultural Sciences at West Texas A&M University. The study will be used to determine which social media medium that students expose themselves more frequently to, and which medium provides a more informational base for communication.

The objectives for this study were as follows:

1. Identify the basic social media behaviors that students partake in on a regular basis.
2. Individually identify the importance of each social media platform as it pertains to use to better understand how social media is important in University recruitment.
3. Compare the four different media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter) as they relate to primary purpose.
4. Identify the role that the Department of Agricultural Sciences social media plays in conjunction with recruitment of future students.
5. Identify the demographics of the participants in this study.

2.4.2. Findings related to Objective One

Objective One: Identify the basic social media behaviors that students partake in on a regular basis.

The first objective of this research was to describe the basic social media behaviors that students partake in on a regular basis. There are four social media platforms that were a sole focus for this study: Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter.

Participants were asked to describe their own personal social media use regarding interest in what platforms they had, the amount of time spent and the time of day with which they were on, along with the advertisements located on those sites. Items were measured using “yes/no” selection and multiple choice selection that had the ability to provide multiple answers. There were 273 surveys distributed and 68 were completed and submitted. Out of the 68 surveys completed, having a response rate of 24.90%. All participants were asked if they use social media, and 100% of the participants stated that they used social media. Figure 2.1 illustrates the findings for the individual utilization of the four social media platforms. Participants had the option to pick multiple social media which resulted in Facebook being the most used social media with 92.60% ($n=63$), and Twitter being the least used platform at 58.82% ($n=40$). Regarding the length of time that the participants are on social media: 14.07% are on social media less than 30 minutes a day, 66.18% spent one to three hours a day, and 19.11% spent between three to six hours a day. Collectively 43 participants responded that their social media use is throughout the

day, without any set times. However, aside from that, the second largest response was between the hours of 6:00pm and 9:00pm.

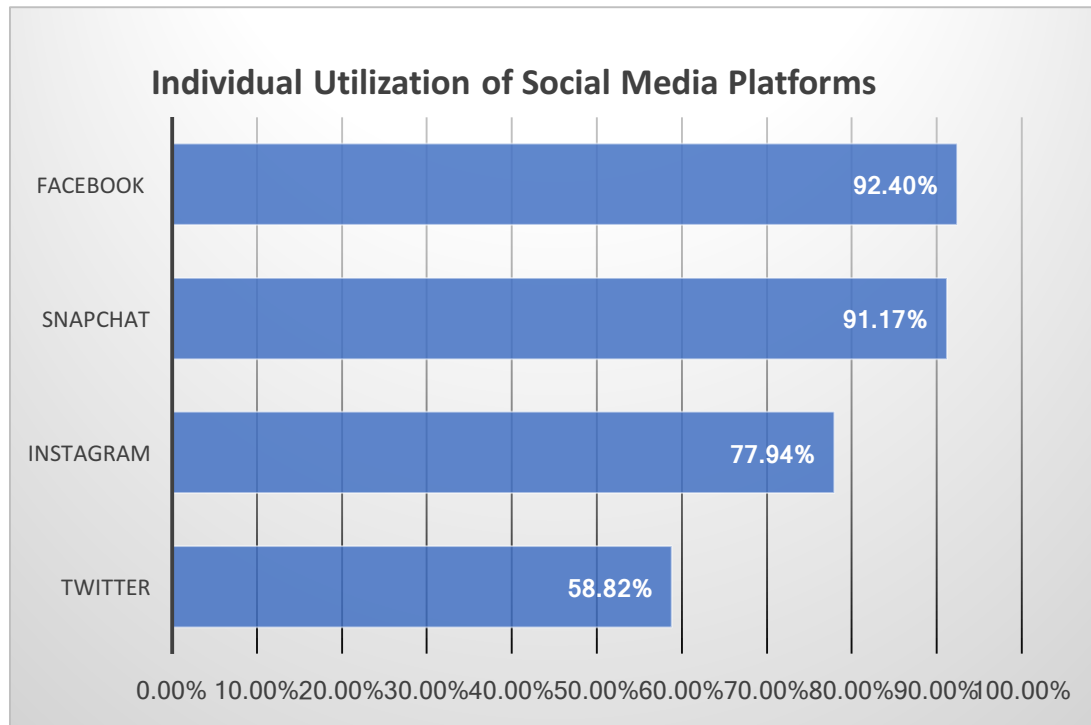


Figure 2.1 *Illustration of the percentage of participant's on that social media platform*

2.4.3. Findings related to Objective Two

Objective two: Individually identify the importance of each social media platform as it pertains to use to better understand how social media is important in University recruitment.

The second objective was to identify the importance of each social media platform along with the purpose that students use those platforms for personal use. The four social media platforms were discussed using the same identifying questions: the time spent on

the platform, primary purpose, the content most preferred to view. Figure 2.2 illustrates the time spend on Facebook.

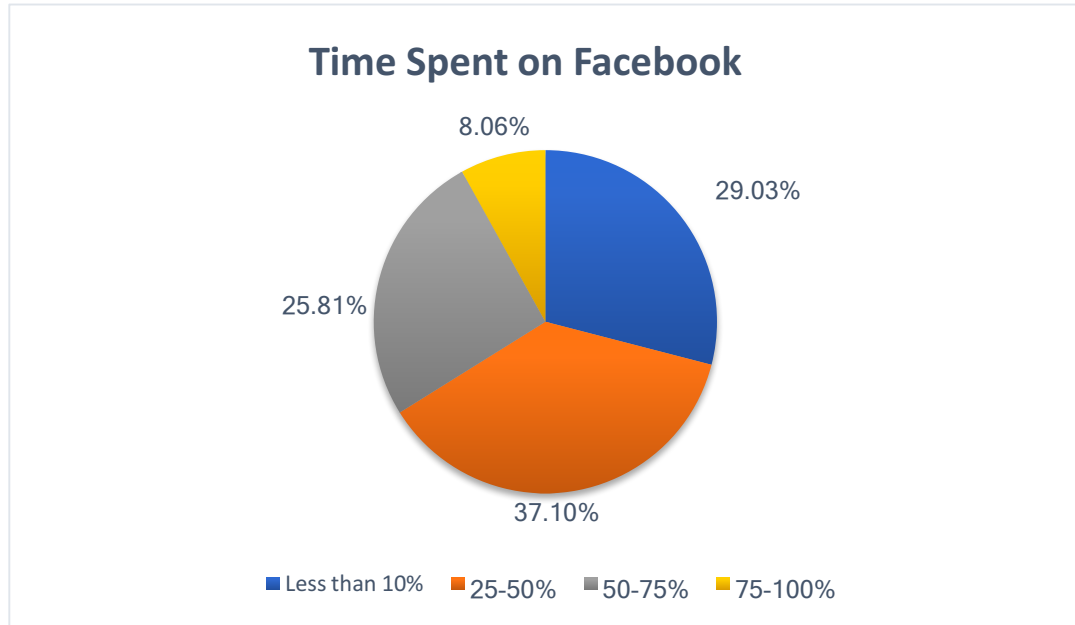


Figure 2.2 Percentage of Time Spent on Facebook

Sixty-three (92.65%) respondents stated they had Facebook, 53 (77.94%) respondents stated that they utilized Instagram, 40 (58.8%) stated they used Twitter, and 63 (92.65%) reported they used Snapchat. Participants stated that 37.10% of them were on Facebook 25-50% of the time as compared to other social media. Figure 2.3 illustrates the results for the time spent on Instagram. Instagram resulted in 45.27% of the respondents were on Instagram between 25-50% of the time. Figure 2.4 illustrates the time spent on Twitter. Twitter had only 40 respondents state they had the platform, and the utilization and time spent was lower compared to the other social media sites. The concluded results were that 42.50% of the participants are logged in and active on Twitter less than 10% of the time

that they set aside for social media use. Figure 2.5 shows the results for Snapchat. Sixty-two respondents (41.94%) stated that they used Snapchat between 50 and 75% of the time. Snapchat had the highest amount of time spent on that platform.

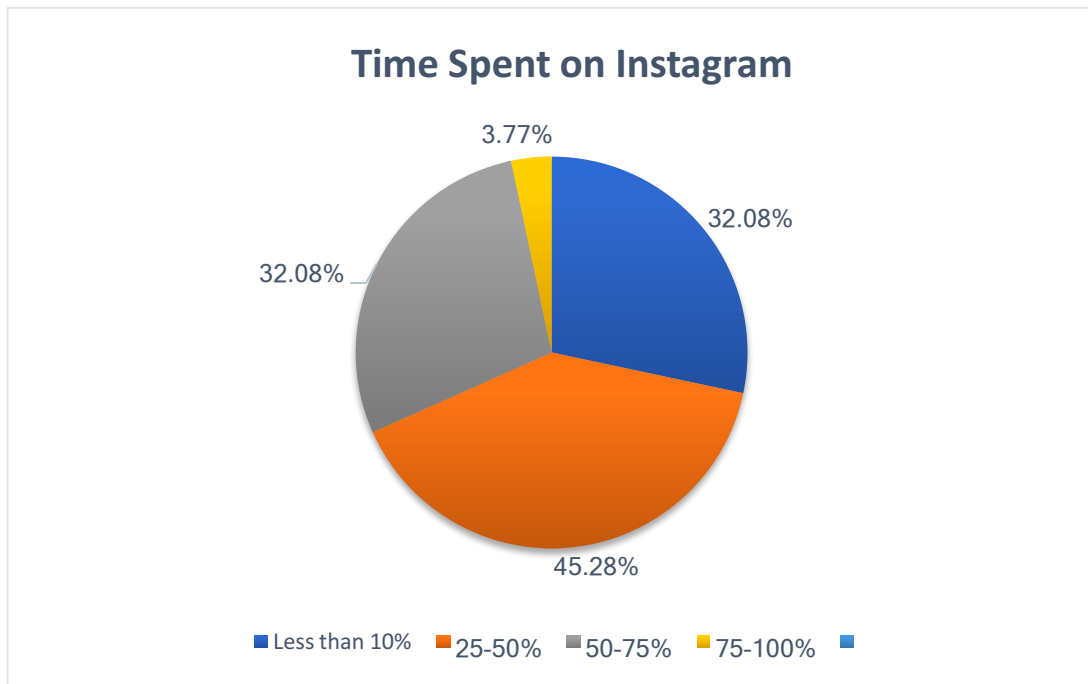


Figure 2.3 Percentage of Time Spent on Instagram

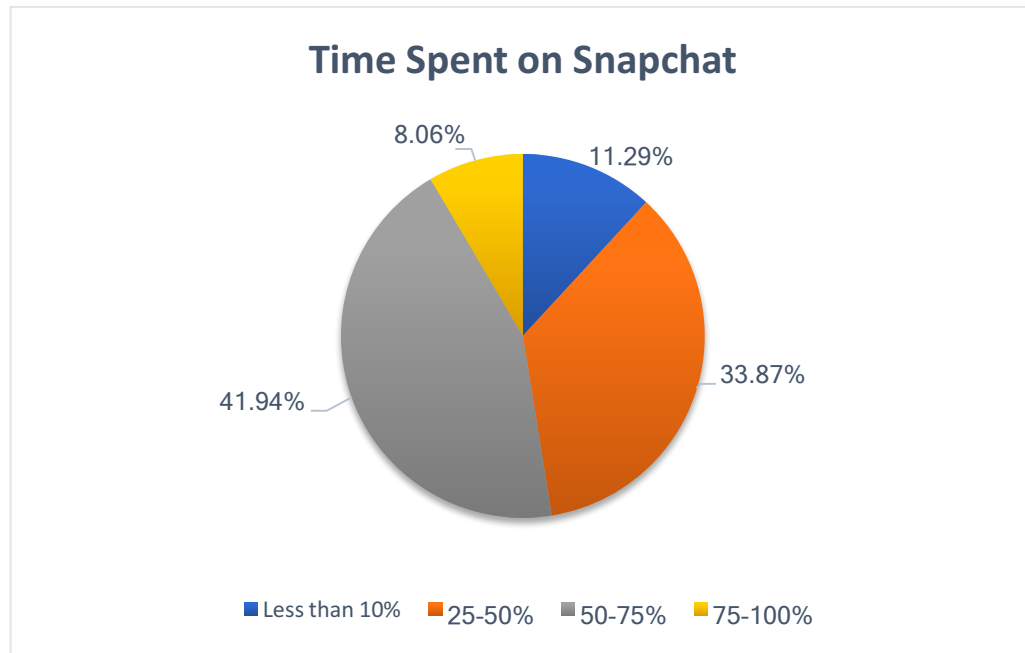


Figure 2.4 Percentage of Time Spent on Snapchat

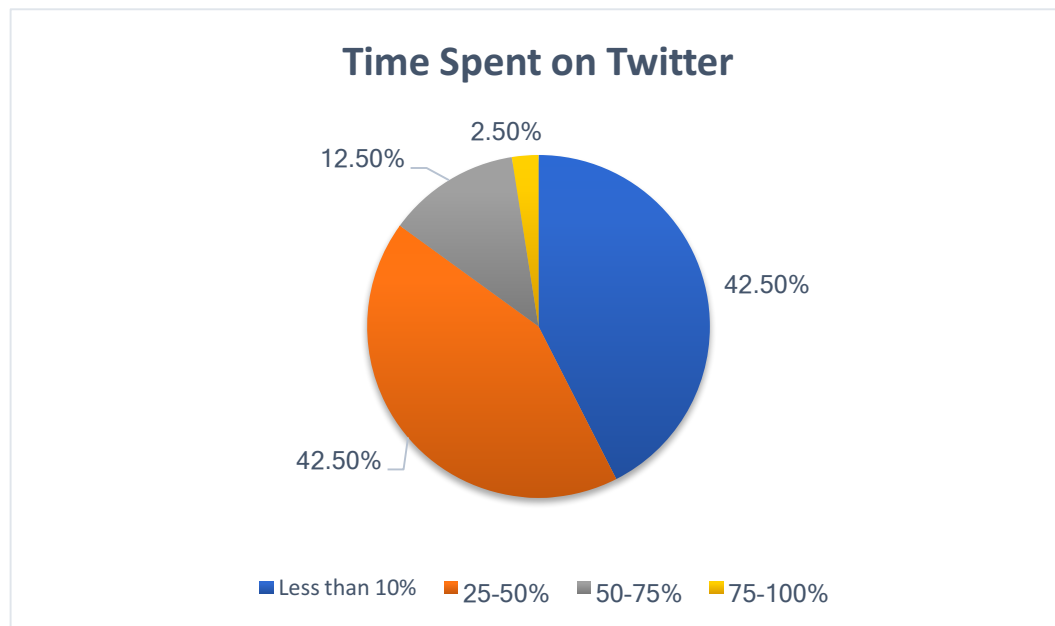


Figure 2.5 Percentage of Time Spent on Twitter

Each participant was asked to explain what their primary use for each platform was. The choices were between information (news), entertainment, shopping (commerce), and keeping up with family and friends (social). Table 2.1 identifies each social media and the primary purpose of each social media. Facebook was used primarily as a social aspect (63.93%, $n=39$) for keeping up with friends and family. Entertainment (19.70%, $n=12$) and then information (16.40%, $n=10$) were close in counts, followed by shopping, with a zero. Instagram was also used primarily as a social medium (60%, $n=30$), meaning keeping up with friends and family, followed by entertainment. The top two the same as Facebook. However, Instagram was noted to be used as a commerce (4%, $n=2$) site over information (2%, $n=1$). Snapchat and Twitter both had entertainment as the primary purpose for use, with Snapchat at 50.85% ($n=30$) and Twitter at 61.54%

($n=24$). The purpose differs after with Snapchat having social at 47.46% ($n=28$), news at 1.70% ($n=1$), and commerce (0%, $n=0$). Twitter with news at 28.21% ($n=11$), social at 10.26% ($n=4$), and commerce at 0% ($n=0$). The purpose was chosen solely based on that particular social media, and the participants only answered if they had that social media.

Table 2.1

Primary Purpose of Social Media Mediums

	<i>f</i>	<i>(%)</i>
Facebook		
Social*	39	63.93
Entertainment	12	19.70
News*	10	16.40
Commerce	0	0
Instagram		
Social	30	60
Entertainment	17	34
Commerce	2	4
News	1	2
Snapchat		
Entertainment	30	50.85
Social	28	47.46
News	1	1.70
Commerce	0	0
Twitter		
Entertainment	24	61.54
News	11	28.21
Social	4	10.26
Commerce	0	0

**Social was considered keeping up with friends and family.*

**News was considered information.*

**Commerce was considered shopping.*

Preference of content was the final question for each medium and the following was rank one to three, 1 being the most viewed and 3 being the least viewed. If the

participant did not have that media site, they were instructed to mark ‘N/A’ and move on. The three content pieces were: videos, photos, written (status’, blogs, etc.). Table 2.2 shows the complete results for preferred Facebook content. Survey participants stated that photos were the No. 1 viewing preference ($M=1.60$, $SD=1.17$). Second in ranking was videos ($M=2.10$, $SD=0.65$), and final in ranking was written ($M=2.35$, $SD=0.79$).

Note: 1 = most preferred to view, 3=least preferred to view

Table 2.2

Preferred Facebook content

	Rank	M	SD
Photos	1	1.60	1.17
Videos	2	2.10	0.65
Written (Status’, blogs, etc.)	3	2.35	0.79

Note: 1 = most preferred to view, 3=least preferred to view

Participants ranked Instagram in the same order, photos were ranked number one ($M=1.18$, $SD=0.49$), followed by videos ($M=2.14$, $SD=0.59$) and then written material ($M=2.60$, $SD= 0.70$). Table 2.3 shows completed results for Instagram.

Table 2.3

Preferred Instagram content

	Rank	M	SD
Photos	1	1.18	0.49
Videos	2	2.14	0.59
Written (Status', blogs, etc.)	3	2.60	0.70

Note: 1 = most preferred to view, 3 = least preferred to view

Snapchat also saw the same ranking as the other two, however mean and standard deviation were reflected differently between all based on the number of participants who had the specific social media and preference as to ranking. Table 2.4 shows the preferred Snapchat content. Photos were ranked number one ($M=1.46$, $SD=0.50$), followed by videos ($M=1.51$, $SD=0.54$). Ranked last for Snapchat was written content ($M=2.88$, $SD=0.64$). Participants who did have a Twitter had a change in ranking for the preferred content on this social media site. Table 2.5 shows completed content for preferred content for Twitter. The highest-ranking content was written ($M=1.60$, $SD=0.81$). The second highest was photos ($M=1.81$, $SD=1.60$), and ranked last was videos ($M=2.26$, 0.89).

Table 2.4

Preferred Snapchat content

	Rank	M	SD
Photos	1	1.46	0.50
Videos	2	1.51	0.54
Written (Status', blogs, etc.)	3	2.88	0.64

Note: 1= most preferred to view, 3=least preferred to view

Table 2.5

Preferred Twitter content

	Rank	M	SD
Written (Status', blogs, etc.)	1	1.60	0.81
Photos	2	1.81	1.60
Videos	3	2.26	0.89

Note: 1= most preferred to view, 3=least preferred to view

2.4.4. Findings related to Objective Three

Objective three: Compare the four different media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter) as they relate to primary purpose.

The third objective of this research was to determine what the primary purpose for each of the social media platforms per the participant's personal use was. Five different questions, all pertaining to different purposes, were asked in the instrument. Participants were asked to rank the four social media mediums (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter). The ranking was from 1 to 4, 1 being the favorite media to use for that purpose, 4 being the least favorite.

The first question pertained to which social media is the favorite to use and the least favorite. Table 2.6 concludes those results. When it came to the most favorite social media site, participants ranked Snapchat ($M=1.81$, $SD=0.85$) as the most favorite out of the four sites. Facebook was second in ranking ($M=2.25$, $SD=1.15$). Instagram was ranked third ($M=2.50$, $SD=1.08$). Twitter was ranked last ($M=3.09$, $SD=1.15$).

Table 2.6

Most and Least Favorite Social Media Site

	Rank	M	SD
Snapchat	1	1.81	0.85
Facebook	2	2.25	1.15
Instagram	3	2.50	1.08
Twitter	4	3.09	1.15

Note: 1 is the most favorite social media site, 4 is the least

The second question regarding a primary purpose for a social media platform involves the most used medium for information. One being the first place they would go to seek information, 4 being the last. The ranking of the four social media sites are Facebook for the most used in information seeking ($M=1.21$, $SD=0.67$) and the least used for information is Snapchat ($M=2.94$, $SD=0.91$). Table 2.7 states the results.

Table 2.7

Primary Purpose for Social Media Site: Information

	Rank	M	SD
Facebook	1	1.21	0.67
Twitter	2	2.69	1.15
Instagram	3	2.74	1.02
Snapchat	4	2.94	0.91

Note: 1 is most used site for the purpose of information, 4 is the least used

The next primary purpose that was ranked was entertainment. Table 2.8 shows completed results. As with the most and least favorite social media site, number one in ranking is Snapchat ($M=1.68$, $SD=0.73$), Facebook was second ($M=2.53$, $SD=1.16$). Ranked third in regards for entertainment was Instagram ($M=2.66$, $SD=1.04$). Twitter was ranked fourth ($M=2.87$, $SD=1.24$).

Table 2.8

Primary Purpose for Social Media Site: Entertainment

	Rank	M	SD
Snapchat	1	1.68	0.73
Facebook	2	2.53	1.16
Instagram	3	2.66	1.04
Twitter	4	2.87	1.24

Note: 1 is most used site for the purpose of entertainment, 4 is the least used

Table 2.9 shows the completed results for the question regarding the primary purpose for social media as shopping. The participants were asked to rank the social media sites for shopping, 1 being the first place they would go for shopping purposes, 4 being the last. Facebook was ranked the first place to go for shopping ($M=1.26$, $SD=0.73$). Ranked fourth for shopping purposes was Snapchat ($M=3.20$, $SD=1.04$).

Table 2.9

Primary Purpose for Social Media Site: Shopping

	Rank	M	SD
Facebook	1	1.26	0.73
Instagram	2	1.98	1.02
Twitter	3	2.96	1.22
Snapchat	4	3.20	1.04

Note: 1 is most used site for the purpose of shopping, 4 is the least used

The final question presented to the participants was over the purpose of social. They were asked to rank which social media site they would prefer to go to for a more social setting. Table 3.1 concludes those results. Snapchat was rank number one for social preference ($M=1.96$, $SD=0.88$). Second in ranking for social was Facebook ($M=2.07$, $SD=1.17$). Instagram was ranked third ($M=2.49$, $SD=1.09$). Ranked fourth for the social aspect was Twitter ($M=3.00$, $SD=1.27$).

Table 3.1

Primary Purpose for Social Media Site: Social

	Rank	M	SD
Snapchat	1	1.96	0.88
Facebook	2	2.07	1.17
Instagram	3	2.49	1.09
Twitter	4	3.00	1.27

Note: 1 is most used site for the purpose of social, 4 is the least used

2.4.5. Findings related to Objective Four

Objective four: Identify the role that the Department of Agricultural Sciences social media plays in conjunction with recruitment of students.

The fourth objective of this research was to identify the current perception for social media for the Department of Agricultural Sciences at West Texas A&M University. The questions ranged from student awareness of the department's social media to rating the experience while using those sites.

Table 3.2 highlights the awareness that the Department of Agricultural Sciences had one or more social media sites. Out of the 68 surveys that were completed and turned in, 51 (75%) of the participants stated that they knew the department had at least one form of social media. 17 (25%) stated that they did not know that the department had social media. It was not stated if the participants knew about the department's social media sites before or after enrollment into the university.

Table 3.2

Awareness of the Department of Agricultural Sciences Social Media Sites

Were you aware?	<i>f</i>	(%)
Yes	51	75
No	17	25

Awareness was followed up with recruitment benefits for the Department of Agricultural Sciences using the social media sites. Participants were asked if the awareness of the department's social media would have had an influence on college choice. Out of the 68 participants, 36 stated 'yes' and 32 answered 'maybe'. None of the participants responded with 'no'.

Table 3.3

Target Audience for the Department of Agricultural Sciences Social Media Sites

Audience	<i>f</i>	(%)
Current Students	26	32.50
Incoming Students	15	18.75
All of the Above	12	15
Alumni	11	13.75
Faculty and Staff	10	12.50
Industry Professionals	6	7.50
None of the Above	0	0

The Department of Agricultural Sciences social media sites were evaluated by the participants to develop an understanding of what audience those social media sites targeted. The survey instrument provided participants the opportunity to give multiple answers. Table 3.3 gives the conclusions of 80 answers were given and the results

showed 32.50% ($n=26$) of the target audience was geared toward current students.

Incoming students is around 18.75% ($n=15$) of the audience for the department's social media.

Participants were asked to rank the department's social media based on experience. They were given a scale of Very Satisfied to Very Dissatisfied. Table 3.4 illustrates the results. All descriptions were rated either neutral or higher, except for entertainment (2 as SD), correct time of day for postings (1 as SD, 1 as VD), aiding in recruitment for future students (4 as SD), and a strong and positive recruitment image (2 as SD). Easily recognizable and representation was rated the highest of Very Satisfied. Ranked in order of the lowest means to the highest was Representation of the Department ($M=1.61$, $SD=0.77$), Easily Recognizable ($M=1.65$, $SD=0.83$), Atmosphere Friendly and Inviting ($M=1.72$, $SD=0.85$), Information About Projects, Academics, etc. ($M=1.72$, $SD=0.80$), Quality of Material Posted ($M=1.92$, $SD=0.83$), Length and Worthiness of Posts ($M=1.94$, $SD=0.83$), Correct Time of Day When Items are Posted so they are Easily Viewed ($M=2.06$, $SD=0.97$), A Strong and Positive Recruitment Image ($M=2.08$, $SD=0.91$), Aided in Recruiting Future Students ($M=2.31$, $SD=0.96$), Entertainment ($M=2.37$, $SD=0.83$).

Table 3.4

<i>Rate of Experience with the Department's Social Media</i>							
Item	<i>VS</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>f</i> <i>N</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>VD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(3)	(4)		
Representation of the Department	29	12	9	0	0	1.61	0.79
Easily recognizable	29	10	11	0	0	1.65	0.83
Atmosphere friendly and inviting	26	10	12	0	0	1.72	0.85
Information about projects, academics, etc.	19	18	14	0	0	1.92	0.80
Quality of material posted	20	16	15	0	0	1.92	0.83
Length and worthiness of posts	19	16	15	0	0	1.94	0.83
Correct time of day when items are posted so they are easily viewed	18	15	15	1	1	2.06	0.97
A strong and positive recruitment image	17	15	16	2	0	2.08	0.91
Aided in recruiting future students	14	12	20	4	0	2.31	0.96

Note: VS (Very Satisfied), SS (Somewhat Satisfied), N (Neutral), SD (Somewhat VD (Very Dissatisfied))

The final evaluation for objective four was over evaluating improvement areas for the Department's social media sites. There was an opportunity for participants to choose

multiple answers which resulted in 137 answer choices given. Percentages were calculated and the higher the percentage the more improvement needed in that area. Table 3.5 provides the calculated data for improvement.

Table 3.5

Areas of Improvement for Influence on the Department's Social Media

Improvement Areas	<i>f</i>	(%)
Information	30	21.90
Graphics	13	9.50
Photos	29	21.17
Time of day when items are posted	12	8.80
Entertainment	19	13.87
Audience that the Department post for	14	10.22
Videos	13	9.50
Written Data	7	5.11

Note: Higher percentages mean more improvement

From the answers provided, information (21.90%) and photos (21.17%) are the two areas that need the most improvement. The least of the improvement areas are Time of day when items are posted (8.80%) and then written data (5.11%). All improvement information is subjective to the participant's that were involved with the survey.

2.4.6. Findings related to Objective Five

Objective Five: Identify the demographics of the participants.

Objective five was developed to be able to understand the population in more detail. Questions regarding gender, age, major, and classification were asked. 70 participants were a part of the demographics section of the survey. There were 29 male

participants and 41 female. Age ranged from 18 years to over 31, with majority being in the 18-21 age range. Classifications were as follows: 26 freshmen, 22 sophomores, 12 juniors, and 10 seniors. The percentage of the major degrees present are shown in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6

Major Degree Area of Participant's

Major	<i>f</i>	(%)
Equine Industry and Business	7	10.00
Agriculture Business/Agriculture Business and Economics	13	18.57
Animal Science	15	21.43
Plant, Soil, and Environmental Science	8	11.43
Agricultural Media and Communication	8	11.43
Agricultural Education Cert/Non-Cert	12	17.14
Pre-Vet	7	10.00

Animal science (21.43%) and Agriculture Business/Agriculture Business and Economics (18.57%) were the two majors that had the highest representation among the population group. The two lowest majors represented were Pre-vet and Equine Industry and Business (10.00%).

2.5. Conclusions

2.5.1. Summary

The adoption of social media has become a fast-paced movement, which means institutions need to have a social media outlet that lets them utilize recruitment at a different level. The Department of Agricultural Sciences at West Texas A&M University utilizes two different social media sites, Facebook and Instagram, and in doing so, helps find a new recruitment level, and strategy. Focus should be made on the platform that will benefit the department's recruiting purposes the most.

2.5.2. Related to Objective One

The first objective of this research was to describe the basic social media behaviors that students partake in on a regular basis. The four social media platforms that were a sole focus were: Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter. The participants were asked to describe their own personal social media use, and each participant could choose more than one platform. Out of the 68 participants, 218 answers were provided, resulting in Facebook having the highest percentage of utilization at 92.40% (n=63). Snapchat followed at having 91.17% (n=62) utilization. Instagram had 77.94% (n=53), and Twitter had the least amount at 58.82% (n=40). The Department of Agricultural Sciences at West Texas A&M University has two out of the four platforms surveyed: Facebook and Instagram. Since Facebook has the highest utilization, the Department has already begun to employ a social media platform that is heavily populated among the participants. However, Snapchat at 91.17% showed that platform as being an influential

social media that the department could consider a presence on that site. Although Twitter is the least used, there may be a niche group of individuals that having a Twitter would serve a purpose for recruitment.

A description of participants length of time on social media concluded that most spend between one to three hours a day on social media (66.19%, $n=45$), and 19.11% ($n=13$) spend anywhere between 3 to 6 hours a day on those social media platforms. The amount of time that is spent on social media is an indicator that social media is valuable to students. Along with the amount of time spent, time of day is an important factor to consider. Most ($n=43$) of the students stated they have no specific time of day for when they are on social media; it varies. A strategy for posting on the Department of Agricultural Sciences Facebook or Instagram would give the department a larger viewing point, depending on the time of day, and how often there is posting on those pages.

2.5.3. Related to Objective Two

Objective two in this research was focused on the importance of each individual social media platform as it pertains to use. The use is to better understand how social media is important in recruitment. Each social media site (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter) were all analyzed and discussed using the same identifying questions. These questions pertained to the time spent on the platform, primary purpose, and then most preferred content to view. Respondents stated that they spent between 25 and 50% of their time on Facebook (37.10%, $n=62$) and Instagram (45.27%, $n=53$). Twitter had respondents on that site less than 10% of the time (42.50%, $n=40$). Snapchat,

however, had the highest amount of time spent, between 50 and 75% of the time. It is important for the department to understand that the two platform sites that they utilize are logged in and used by respondents between 25-50% of the time. With Snapchat being the highest utilization, it would be important to see the development of a Snapchat account for the Department of Agricultural Sciences at West Texas A&M University, since participants use it 50-75% of the time.

Participants were asked to explain the primary purpose they use each social media site for. The choices were between information (news), entertainment, shopping (commerce), keeping up with family and friends (social). Facebook (63.93%, $n=39$) and Instagram (60%, $n=30$) were both used as a 'social' site or keeping up with friends and family. Snapchat (50.85%, $n=30$) and Twitter (61.54%, $n=24$) were both ranked as 'entertainment' being the sole purpose that respondents frequent the sites. Facebook and Instagram continue to develop as the two primary social media sites for the respondents, the use for them is identifiable different than Snapchat and Twitter. The difference is Facebook and Instagram are used as a social preference, versus Snapchat and Twitter, that has an entertainment component.

The final evaluation of objective two comes from the content that participants would rather view on each social platform. The three content pieces were: videos, photos, written (status', blogs, etc). Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat all had photos ranked as the number one content respondents want to see. Photos ($M=1.60$, $SD=1.17$) on Facebook were surprising compared to the written ($M=2.35$, $SD=0.79$) due to the design of Facebook. That platform is geared to have more written content versus photo.

Snapchat having photos ($M=1.46$, $SD=0.50$) ranked number one and then videos ($M=1.51$, $SD=0.54$) is entirely appropriate for the platform. It is solely based on sending photos and videos, rather than any written content. Twitter, however, had an entirely different ranking when it came to three content areas that participants viewed on the social media sites. Written ($M=1.60$, $SD=0.81$) was ranked number one, then photos with a mean of 1.81 and standard deviation of 1.60, followed by videos ($M=2.26$, $SD=0.89$). The design of Twitter is more open, where the following of celebrities, politicians, or even friends is easy access, hence aiding in the ranking of written first with the primary content as entertainment.

2.5.4. Related to Objective Three

The third objective for this study was to compare the four different media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter) as they relate to a primary purpose. There were five questions, all pertaining to different purposes, asked in the instrument. Participants were asked to rank the four social media platforms. The ranking was from 1 to 4, 1 being the favorite media to use for that purpose, 4 being the least favorite.

Each question pertained to a different purpose, the first was to rank the most favorite social media site to use to the least site used. Snapchat was ranked as the most favorite social media site to use with a mean of 1.81 and standard deviation of 0.85. Facebook was second in ranking ($M=2.25$, $SD=1.15$). Twitter was ranked fourth with a mean of 3.09 and a standard deviation of 1.15. Snapchat was ranked the highest for most

favorite and for entertainment purposes. Participants enjoy the design of Snapchat as entertaining with photos and videos being the main content, followed by using it more than 50-75% of the time. Since Snapchat is used the most among participants, the Department of Agricultural Sciences could add that platform to the sites that they already access. Allowing the department to have a presence on a site that seems to be popular among participants. Facebook follows with social being the purpose and photos and videos being the most viewed content, and students being on Facebook 25 to 50% of the time. Facebook has a more social purpose versus other reasons students log into their Facebook accounts. That particular platform has a more personal edge to it, adding a humanize look (Solis, 2008) to the department.

The second question was based on the purpose of information. Although respondents said that the preferred content for Twitter was information, Facebook is ranked number one for the primary purpose of the site is information ($M=1.21$, $SD=0.67$). Twitter is ranked second for the primary purpose is information with a mean of 2.69 and standard deviation of 1.15. Snapchat is ranked last ($M=2.94$, $SD=0.91$).

The next primary purpose that was ranked was entertainment. Snapchat was ranked number one ($M=1.68$, $SD=0.73$) for the primary purpose of entertainment and as far as viewing content, was also seen as entertainment. Facebook was ranked second ($M=2.53$, $SD=1.16$). Instagram was ranked third for not only most/least favorite, information based, and entertainment ($M=2.66$, $S=1.04$). Twitter ($M=2.87$, $SD= 1.24$) was ranked last for entertainment as its primary purpose.

The primary purpose of shopping was ranked. Although, shopping does not make a huge impact on recruitment of future students, however, shopping allows sites to have more viewer turn over. Facebook was ranked number one for shopping ($M=1.26$, $SD=0.73$), followed by Instagram ranked second ($M=1.98$, $SD=1.02$). Snapchat was ranked fourth when it comes to shopping being the primary purpose. The design of Snapchat is not a commercially based site.

The final question that was presented to the participants was over the primary purpose of social. The ranking was asked to rank the site that they would prefer to go to for a more social setting. Just like with the preferred content to view, Snapchat was ranked No. 1 for social with a mean of 1.96 and a standard deviation of 0.88. Facebook was ranked second. Followed by Instagram, which is again, ranked third ($M=2.49$, $SD=1.09$). Ranked last for the primary purpose of social is Twitter ($M=3.00$, $SD=1.27$). Facebook and Snapchat seem to be the two social media sites that maintain a constant stance of being ranked one or two for the primary purposes of most favorite, entertainment, and social. The design of these two sites are both user friendly and popular, meaning the target audience is larger on these platforms. The department already has a presence on Facebook, but the other potential students that are on Snapchat could be a persuading factor to be present on that platform as well.

2.5.5. Related to Objective Four

Objective four was designed to identify the role the Department of Agricultural Sciences social media play in conjunction with recruitment of students. The research

ranged from the awareness of the Department's social media sites to rating the overall experience while using those sites.

Out of the 68 surveys that were completed and submitted, 51 (75%) of the participants knew that the Department had, at least one, social media site. Seventeen (25%) said they were unaware of the presence. Awareness was followed by the recruitment benefits of the Department's site. The 68 participants within the study were asked if the social media would have had an influence on their college choice in enrolling in West Texas A&M University, particularly within in the Department of Agricultural Sciences. Thirty-six stated 'yes', and 32 answered 'maybe.' None of the participants responded with 'no'. The participants stated that if they had had the knowledge of the department's social media sites, it would have added in their decision on a university. That shows that social media is particularly important within their lives, including future endeavors such as deciding on a university.

The Department's social media sites were evaluated by what audience the sites primarily target. The instrument provided the participants with the ability to give multiple answers. 80 responses were recorded and current students ($n=26$, 32.50%) had the highest percentage, followed by incoming students ($n=15$, 18.74%). Meaning most of the posts that are on the Department of Agricultural Sciences social media sites, Facebook and Instagram, focus primarily on current students. Whether that means what current students are doing and are involved in or to promote the Department amongst students on campus. The audience that had the lowest percentage as a target was industry professionals ($n=6$, 7.50%).

Finally, participants were asked to rate the experience while on the Department's social media. The scale was from Very Satisfied (VS) to Very Dissatisfied (VD). Easily recognizable and representation of the Department had the highest number of ranking within Very Satisfied ($n=29$). Second was Quality of Material Posted at 20 in Very Satisfied. Quality of Material Posted, Information about projects, academics, etc, Atmosphere friendly and inviting, Easily recognizable, Representation of the Department, and Length and worthiness of posts all had ratings of Neutral (N) to Very Satisfied (VS). Those six areas did not rate below a Neutral. However, entertainment had a Somewhat Dissatisfied ($n=2$). Correct time of day when items are posted so they are easily viewed had a rating of Somewhat Dissatisfied ($n=1$) and a Very Dissatisfied ($n=1$). The rate of experience that involved aiding in recruiting future students was given a rating of Somewhat Dissatisfied ($n=4$), and a strong and positive recruitment image given a Somewhat Dissatisfied ($n=2$). This shows that although the social media sites have a strong, and positive image for the Department of Agricultural Sciences for current students, the recruitment side is lacking. Evaluating how to recruit on social media could be difficult due to the multiple audiences that view the department's sites. The department could develop each platform to target a specific audience. Alessandri (2006) stated that colleges and universities have the ability to employ graphical elements that target a specific audience. Those platforms could become more focused on a target or a few target audiences in order to fulfill the duty of recruiting.

The final evaluation for objective four was to evaluate the improvement areas for the Department's social media sites. There was an opportunity for students to choose

multiple answers, resulting in 137 answer choices given. The percentages were calculated and the higher the percentage the more improvement is needed in those areas.

Information ($n=30$, 21.90%) was the area that needs the most improvement, photos ($n=29$, 21.17%) was the next area that needs improvement. Entertainment had the third highest percentage at 13.87% ($n=19$). The area that was marked as the lowest for improvement was written data at 5.11% ($n=7$). Written data was the lowest content that students wanted to view on social media, except for on Twitter.

2.5.6. Related to Objective Five

The research had one final objective which was to identify the demographics of the participants. Demographics help to provide a basis as to who partook in this study. Although only 68 completed surveys were turned in, 70 participants answered the demographic portion of the instrument. There were 29 male participants and 41 female. There ages ranged from 18 to over 31 and the majority being in the 18-21 age range.

The major degree areas were recorded and the majority of the students that partake in this study were Animal Science ($n=15$, 21.43%) students. The two degrees that had the lowest participants were Pre-vet and Equine Industry and Business ($n=7$, 10.00%).

2.5.7. Recommendations

With this descriptive study, caution should be taken as to not interpret and generalize the findings for this population in comparison to others. All parties involved

within the Department of Agricultural Sciences at West Texas A&M University should consider recommendations based on the standard data that this research provided. There is an impact that social media has on specific higher education, particularly student recruitment (Rutter, Roper, and Lettice, 2016). Social media has multiple uses and purposes viewed through students eyes. Recruitment is a main one to consider. Although this study measured a small amount of recruitment items within the departments social media sites, this could be a very influential part of students decision to enroll within the department. Further research should be done, to focus on just recruitment with one of the social media sites that the Department currently has or could have. The idea that, while recruiting, future students could be given a more specific site that is designed entirely for them. Further research should be done to look at other factors that were not included in this study. This study focused only on what the Department of Agricultural Sciences is doing specifically within their social media to recruit students. Factors outside of the Department's control and social media could be worth reviewing in order to better understand another influence in attracting students to view West Texas A&M University's social media sites, and then enrolling to the University.

The social media focus within the Department of Agricultural Sciences is within the two mediums of Facebook and Instagram, and the main audience is current students. Utilizing all four social media sites, and providing a main focal audience for each could be another consideration, although not everyone has every social media platform or uses it, which was found among the participants. The idea that a specific audience could go to a social media site can give a more personal and beneficial visit to the site. The

Department of Agricultural Sciences recruits, largely, within high school FFA students (Gammill, 2016), meaning agricultural science teachers are worked with closely.

Allowing social media sites to be user friendly to those teachers could provide another viewpoint in recruiting through social media.

Furthermore, adopting a social media recruitment plan could be helpful within the department. By having a strategy plan for the social media will allow the information, photos, entertainment, and finally recruitment purposes all mesh together to seem well thought out and up-to-date to the audience. Another thing to consider within this study is that it focused on first-year freshmen and transfer students, all who had social media, but not all had the same platforms. Providing an opportunity for all students to get involved within the department, not just on Facebook and Instagram, but possibly within the other two media sites would give another side to recruitment.

For future reference, the department could explore the use of the other two social media sites (Snapchat and Twitter) that had a significance in this study. Since sites are free to use, there would be no potential loss of investment for the department, however, the sites may not be as popular as the ones being currently used. If they are not, a deletion of the sites can happen with no major loss or harm done.

It is recommended the department continue this research in the future. One direction this study can be directed toward is by expanding the population surveyed to the entire Department of Agricultural Sciences. In doing so, this could potentially change the statistics as well as perspective within recruitment strategies. This could also help the Department to determine what social media site to focus on completely.

2.5.8. Discussions and Implications

First-year students in this study chose Facebook and Snapchat as the two most influential social media sites that they utilize daily. Additionally, these students spend anywhere from 25 to 75% of their time on these sites, making these sites the most heavily viewed. Most social media sites are used for ‘social’ and ‘entertainment’ purposes and that photos and videos are the two items that students want to view over written material. Improvement areas for the Department of Agricultural Sciences social media sites begins with information, which is a slight contradiction to what students want to view on social media sites. However, seeing as the department’s site needs to focus more on recruiting future students and having a strong recruitment image, then more general information about the department should be present on social media. Participants concluded, within objective four, that having awareness of the social media sites would have helped to determine their college choice. This shows that social media aids in brand strength and further the outreach for recruitment (Rutter, 2016).

Recruitment strategies within the department vary from mail-outs to visits from Departmental representatives, all of which have a cost associated with them. Social media sites, however, do not and that can give a valuable influence on recruitment without a monetary loss within the Department. Also, the outreach on social media is larger than other types of recruitment, the target audience is essentially large. This larger target audience can potentially hurt a portion of recruitment since the department has a reputation of students having a good first experience with face-to-face interaction

(Robertson, 2014). However, social media can grab future students attention and allow them to explore what the department has to offer before setting foot on campus, thus giving them a different viewpoint.

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West Texas A&M University

Academic Research Environmental Health and Safety

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INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR HUMAN SUBJECTS

Letter of Approval

March 6, 2017

Hope Sorrells
26300 Newton Rd.
Canyon, TX 79015

The West Texas A&M University Institutional Review Board is pleased to inform you that upon review, proposal #04-01-17 for your study titled, “**Utilizing Social Media Communication Mediums as a Recruitment Strategy**” meets the requirements of the WTAMU Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) No. 15.99.05.W1.01AR Institutional Review Board (Human Subject Research). Approval is granted for one calendar year. This approval expires on **March 6, 2018**.

Principal investigators assume the following responsibilities:

1. **Continuing Review:** The protocol must be renewed on or before the expiration date if the research project requires more than one year for completion. A [Continuing Review form](#) along with required documents must be submitted on or before the stated deadline. Failure to do so will result in study termination and/or loss of funding.
2. **Completion Report:** At the conclusion of the research project (including data analysis and final written papers), a [Close out form](#) must be submitted to AR-EHS.
3. **Unanticipated Problems and Adverse Events:** Pursuant to [SOP No. 15.99.05.W1.13AR](#), unanticipated problems and serious adverse events must be reported to AR-EHS.
4. **Reports of Potential Non-Compliance:** Pursuant to [SOP No. 15.99.05.W1.05AR](#), potential non-compliance, including deviations from the protocol and violations, must be reported to the IRB office immediately.
5. **Amendments:** Changes to the protocol must be requested by submitting an [Amendment form](#) to AR-EHS for review by the IRB. The Amendment must be approved by the IRB before being implemented. Amendments do not extend time granted on the initial approval
6. **Consent Forms:** When using a consent form, only the IRB approved form is allowed.
7. **Audit:** Any proposal may be subject to audit by the IRB Administrator during the life of the study. Investigators are responsible for maintaining complete and accurate records for five years and making them available for inspection upon request.
8. **Recruitment:** All recruitment materials must be approved by the IRB. Recruitment materials distributed to potential participants must use the approved text and include

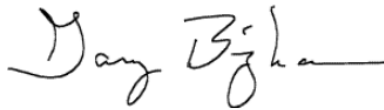
the study's IRB number, approval date, and expiration dates in the following format:
WTAMU IRB##-##-## Approved: ###/###/#### Expiration Date: ###/###/####.

9. **FERPA and PPRA:** Investigators conducting research with students must have appropriate approvals from the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) administrator at the institution where the research will be conducted in accordance with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) if applicable to the research being proposed. The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) protects the rights of parents in students ensuring that written parental consent is required for participation in surveys, analysis, or evaluation that ask questions falling into categories of protected information.

Sixty days prior to the expiration of this proposal, you will receive a notification of the approaching expiration date at which time you will need to submit an [Amendment/Continuation/Close out](#) form.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,



Dr. Gary Bigham
Chair, WTAMU IRB



Dr. Angela Spaulding,
Vice President of Research and Compliance

Informed Consent Form

West Texas A&M University Master's Thesis Research Participation

Title Of Study: Survey of Social Media mediums for Recruitment Purposes on First Year Students within the Department of Agricultural Sciences

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to collect information about different social media mediums prospective agricultural students might use on an individual basis. Results from this study will be used in order to update or change current recruitment strategies employed by the Department of Agricultural Science students at West Texas A&M University.

Procedures

Participants will be asked several questions pertaining to your own personal social media usage, Departmental activity on social media, along with general questions pertaining to your academic profile. The questionnaire will take approximately 15 to 20 minutes. Questions are designed to determine how crucial social media mediums are used in daily life in order to influence its use within the Department of Agricultural Sciences. This questionnaire will be conducted with an online Qualtrics-created survey.

Risks/Discomforts

There are no direct risks for participants, other than utilization of time during daily life.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits for participants. However, it is hoped that through participation, researchers will begin to learn more about what social media mediums engage more student interaction.

Confidentiality

All data obtained from participants will be kept confidential and will only be reported in an aggregate format, which is reporting only combined results and not individual ones. All questionnaires will be confidential with no personal identifying information requested. No one other than the primary investigator and assistant researchers listed will have access to them. The data collected will be stored in the HIPPA-compliant computer, on the Qualtrics-secure database until it has been deleted by the primary investigator.

Compensation

There is no direct compensation for participants.

Participation

Participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You have the right to refuse or withdraw, entirely, at any time without any jeopardy to your academic status or university standing. If you desire to withdraw, please simply close out the internet window that the survey is located on.

Questions about the Research

If participants have any questions regarding this survey or study, they may contact Hope Sorrells, hsorrells@wtamu.edu, Kevin Williams, kwilliams@wtamu.edu, or Tanner Robertson, trobertson@wtamu.edu.

Questions about your Rights as Research Participants

If participants have questions that they do not feel comfortable discussing with the researcher, you may contact the West Texas A&M University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, Office of Research Services, or call (806) 651-2732.

Survey Instrument

Demographics

1. Gender

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

2. Age

- ☐ Under 18
- ☐ 18-21
- ☐ 22-25
- ☐ 26-30
- ☐ 30 +

3. Major

- ☐ Equine Business and Industry
- ☐ Agriculture Business/Agriculture Business and Economics
- ☐ Animal Science
- ☐ Plant, Soil, and Environmental Science
- ☐ Agricultural Media and Communication
- ☐ Agricultural Education Cert/Non-Cert
- ☐ Pre-Vet
- ☐ Non-Agriculture Major

4. What is your classification?

- ☐ Freshman
- ☐ Sophomore
- ☐ Junior
- ☐ Senior

Social Media (Personal)

1. Do you currently use social media?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

2. If yes, out of the following choices, what social media do you use? (Circle all that apply)

Facebook

Snapchat

Instagram

Twitter

3. During the course of one day, how long are you on social media?

- ☐ Less than 30 minutes a day
- ☐ 1-3 hours a day
- ☐ 3-6 hours a day
- ☐ 6-8 hours a day
- ☐ More than 9 hours a day

4. Consider the advertisements that pop up on your social media, are they:

- ☐ News
- ☐ Clothing
- ☐ Informational/School
- ☐ Involve your hobbies
- ☐ Agricultural based
- ☐ None of the above

5. During, what time of day are you on social media the most?

- ☐ Before 6:00am
- ☐ 7:00am – 9:00am
- ☐ 9:00am – 11:00 am
- ☐ 12:00pm – 3:00pm
- ☐ 3:00pm – 5:00pm
- ☐ After 5:00pm
- ☐ About the same at any given time

Social Media: Facebook

If you have a Facebook account, please answer the questions in this section, if you do not, please move on to the next section.

1. What is the time you spend on Facebook, compared to other social media?

- ☐ Less than 10% of the time
- ☐ 25% - 50% of the time
- ☐ 50% - 75% of the time
- ☐ 75% - 100% of the time

2. What is your primary purpose for using Facebook?

- ☐ Information (News)
- ☐ Entertainment
- ☐ Shopping (Commerce)
- ☐ Keeping up with family and friends (Social)

3. When on Facebook what content do you prefer to view?

(Please rank the following answers: 1 = most viewed, 3 = least viewed)

_____ Videos
_____ Photos
_____ Written (Status', blogs, etc.)

Social Media: Instagram

If you have an Instagram account, please answer the questions in this section, if you do not, please move on to the next section.

1. What is the time you spend on Instagram, compared to other social media?

- ☐ Less than 10% of the time
- ☐ 25% - 50% of the time
- ☐ 50% - 75% of the time
- ☐ 75% - 100% of the time

2. What is your primary purpose for using Instagram?

- ☐ Information (News)
- ☐ Entertainment
- ☐ Shopping (Commerce)
- ☐ Keeping up with family and friends (Social)

3. When on Instagram what content do you prefer to view?

(Please rank the following answers: 1 = most viewed, 3 = least viewed)

_____ Videos
_____ Photos

_____ Written (Status', blogs, etc.)

Social Media: Snapchat

If you have a Snapchat account, please answer the questions in this section, if you do not, please move on to the next section.

1. What is the time you spend on Snapchat, compared to other social media?

- ☐ Less than 10% of the time
- ☐ 25% - 50% of the time
- ☐ 50% - 75% of the time
- ☐ 75% - 100% of the time

2. What is your primary purpose for using Snapchat?

- ☐ Information (News)
- ☐ Entertainment
- ☐ Shopping (Commerce)
- ☐ Keeping up with family and friends (Social)

3. When on Snapchat what content do you prefer to view?

(Please rank the following answers: 1 = most viewed, 3 = least viewed)

_____ Videos

_____ Photos

_____ Written (Status', blogs, etc.)

Social Media: Twitter

If you have a Twitter account, please answer the questions in this section, if you do not, please move on to the next section.

1. What is the time you spend on Twitter, compared to other social media?

- ☐ Less than 10% of the time
- ☐ 25% - 50% of the time
- ☐ 50% - 75% of the time
- ☐ 75% - 100% of the time

2. What is your primary purpose for using Twitter?

- ☐ Information (News)
- ☐ Entertainment
- ☐ Shopping (Commerce)
- ☐ Keeping up with family and friends (Social)

3. When on Twitter what content do you prefer to view?

(Please rank the following answers: 1 = most viewed, 3 = least viewed)

- _____ Videos
- _____ Photos
- _____ Written (Status', blogs, etc.)

Social Media

1. What social media is considered your most and least favorite?
(Please rank these in order from 1 to 4, 1 being favorite and 4 being least favorite)

- _____ Facebook
- _____ Instagram
- _____ Snapchat
- _____ Twitter

2. When looking at the primary purpose for **Information**, what social media do you use?
(Please rank these in order from 1 to 4, 1 being the first place you go, 4 being the last)

- _____ Facebook
- _____ Instagram
- _____ Snapchat
- _____ Twitter

3. When looking at the primary purpose for **Entertainment**, what social media do you use?
(Please rank these in order from 1 to 4, 1 being the first place you go, 4 being the last)

- _____ Facebook
- _____ Instagram
- _____ Snapchat
- _____ Twitter

4. When looking at the primary purpose for **Shopping**, what social media do you use?
(Please rank these in order from 1 to 4, 1 being the first place you go, 4 being the last)

- _____ Facebook
- _____ Instagram
- _____ Snapchat
- _____ Twitter

5. When looking at the primary purpose for **Social**, what social media do you use?
(Please rank these in order from 1 to 4, 1 being the first place you go, 4 being the last)

_____ Facebook
_____ Instagram
_____ Snapchat
_____ Twitter

Social Media: West Texas A&M University

1. Were you aware that the Department of Ag Sciences has at least one form of social media?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

2. If yes, which one(s) are you aware of?

3. If you were aware that the department has at least one form of social media, would knowing, before applying, that the department had social media helped to influence your choice in coming to WTAMU?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Note: Under Subsection “Social Media: West Texas A&M University”

- If you answered “No” to question #1, you are now finished with the survey.

- If you answered “Yes” to question #1, please proceed to the next question.

3. In your opinion, after viewing the Departments social media, what audience did the social media target?

- ☐ Incoming students (Including freshman, transfers, grad and PhD)
- ☐ Current students
- ☐ Faculty/Staff

- Alumni
- Industry Professionals
- All of the above
- None of the above

4. How often, would you describe, your viewing of any of the Department of Agricultural Sciences social media? (Please circle one)

- Less than 30 minutes a day
- 1-3 hours a day
- 3-6 hours a day
- 6-8 hours a day
- More than 9 hours a day

5. How would you rate your experience with using the Department's social media?

	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Quality of material posted	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Entertainment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Information about projects, academics, etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Correct time of day when items are posted so they are easily viewed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Atmosphere friendly and inviting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Easily recognizable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Representation of the Department	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Length and wordiness of posts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. Could our social media be more influential in your daily social media use?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

7. If answered yes, please circle which areas we need to improve on in order to become more influential?

Information
Graphics
Photos
Time of Day when we Post
Entertainment
Audience that we post to
Videos
Written Data

8. Please take a moment and explain how we can improve on the area that you chose in question