

PROFESSIONAL ANALYSIS:

Developing a communications plan and content

RESEARCH ANALYSIS:

EXPLORING THE MEDIA USES OF FARMERS WHEN ESTABLISHING THEIR
BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS: A CASE STUDY OF TYSON FOODS LOCAL GRAIN
SERVICES (LGS)

University of Missouri School of Journalism

Master's Project

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ii

LIST OF TABLEv

Chapter One: Introduction1

Chapter Two: Weekly Field Notes6

Chapter Three: Self Evaluation.....17

Chapter Four: Project Physical Evidence23

 Tyson LGS FY19 Communications Plan (presentation version)24

 Harvest social media campaign.....31

 New Facebook page36

 Tradeshow follow-up plan.....38

 Commodity Weekly Update: Global Insights39

 Market commentary video scripts41

 Example of mailer invites for events.....44

Chapter Five: Research Analysis45

 Introduction/Purpose of Study.....45

 Theory Framework46

 Literature Review52

 Methodology54

 Findings58

 Discussion63

 Conclusion and Limitations of the Study71

 References74

Appendix80

 Original Project Proposal80

 IRB Approval105

LIST OF TABLE

Table	Page
1. Summary of how farmers use media channels	59

Chapter One: Introduction

This professional project consists of my professional work with Tyson Foods, Inc. subsidiary, Tyson Local Grain Services (LGS), and a research paper suitable for publication about farmers and their media uses. This project opportunity allowed me to develop a communications plan for the group, and conduct research to better understand how and why farmers are using media channels. There are many factors that have led me to this project and prepared for it including my undergraduate journalism courses, internships, and graduate courses. Before entering the Journalism Master's Program, I spent four years with the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources (CAFNR) and the Missouri School of Journalism doing my undergraduate degree in Science and Agricultural Journalism with an emphasis in Broadcast Journalism. This unique experience has led to me many valuable internships, gained skills, taught me valuable lessons, and led me to my new professional direction.

My journalism and broadcast courses laid the foundations and concepts of producing great journalism. Every broadcast course I took – B1, B2, B3, and Advanced Reporting – have taught me how to work under pressure but still produce quality work, write a story in many different forms including for the web and TV, be independent but still be part of a team, conduct thorough secondary research, and ultimately allowed me to serve the public. Courses in CAFNR were imperative in understanding the business and economics of agriculture, which will be useful when I begin my professional project. Additionally, my internships with Farm Journal Media, KOMU-TV, MU Extension, and RFD-TV gave me the opportunities to sharpen my

writing skills and gain a better understanding of where journalism and communications fit in the economy.

My career and professional path has given me diverse experiences and the skills required to achieve my goals. For four years, I focused on honing my skills as a reporter but changed paths a few months before I graduated. The broadcast business model was changing, and the work hours and structure of job hopping was not ideal. I still held on to the concepts and groundwork of journalism – serving the public with integrity, storytelling, and research. I made the switch and applied to graduate school to gain a better understanding of strategic communications. Beforehand, I took a summer internship with Tyson Local Grain Services (LGS) in corporate communications researching and helping Tyson LGS with a short-term communications plan, create content, and buy media spots. More importantly, this internship allowed me to understand the business of commodity purchasing and who its consumers are, which will be vital in successfully completing this professional project.

Contributing to the reason why I am prepared to take on my professional project is my graduate assistantship with MU Health Care working in public relations and communications. This opportunity gave me a better understanding of how PR, communications, and marketing collaborate in a corporate environment. In this position, I had the opportunity to own and execute a strategic press release and collaborate with the video team. The strategy behind the press release was to pressure state legislators to allocate more money to a program that would benefit rural medicine in Missouri. Being able to own this story and see its result was incredibly rewarding. Additionally, I worked with internal communications and gained a better understanding of how important it is to cultivate a healthy and engaging work environment for employees. I also produced a monthly media placement video report for the leadership team –

MU Health Care executive team and University of Missouri System leaders – to show how our experts have been used in the media to educate the public about health issues and research findings.

Perhaps the most beneficial experiences I have had at the Journalism School has been graduate school. My first semester in my core classes, *Mass Media Seminar* with Dr. Monique Luisi and *Qualitative Research Methods* with Dr. Yong Volz, challenged me and forced me to start thinking critically about the range of issues pertinent to journalism and mass media, how it is made, the people who make it, and the people who consume it. *Mass Media Seminar* was crucial in understanding how to apply theory to research and to understand what constituted a good research. Not only that, I have learned to appreciate theory in an academic environment and learned how to apply it to practical problems. I plan to enter the workforce after graduation but can carry what I have learned in *Mass Media Seminar* and theories to solve problems.

Qualitative Research Methods laid the groundwork for my research design. It taught me how to choose the right method to elicit responses in order to achieve a specific objective, and how to analyze and create a strong research design. Additionally, qualitative research methods are frequently used in strategic communications and gaining a full understanding of it will allow me to do an even better job in the profession I choose. I enjoyed qualitative research so much I enrolled in *Advanced Qualitative Research Methods* with Dr. Yong Volz. Qualitative research can be tricky when interpreting data because of its subjective nature. This class was important to me because I wanted to learn the concepts of analyzing qualitative data, which will help me produce quality findings for my research and carry the concepts with me in my future work in strategic communications. For this class, I also conducted a textual analysis research of how corn

farmers use online agricultural forums. This exploratory study gave me more experience with the topic, and conducting research and writing a research paper.

Additionally, the strategic communications courses I took in graduate school have been invaluable. *Branded Storytelling* with Jim Flink and David Germano taught me about content marketing and the importance of research when developing a deterministic target market. I was able to put the concepts I learned into practice by conducting research and creating a treatment plan for a distillery in Tennessee. *Public Relations* with Jon Stemmler helped me refine the public relations work I did with MU Health Care and think differently about the approaches I take. In addition, *Public Relations* allowed myself and a team of graduate and honors students to conduct research and create a campaign for General Motors (GM). This experience allowed me to understand how to plan for a public relations campaign and what a public relations campaign entailed. *Management of Strategic Communications* with Jamie Flink was crucial in helping me discover what I want to do professionally. This course allowed me to work with a talented group of students on a campaign for the Chicago-based restaurant, Portillo's. I worked on the qualitative research and consumer insight team conducting focus groups and turning data into insights. The skills and theories I learned in *Qualitative Research Methods* played a large role here. I was able to help guide my team in research and how to analyze the vast amount of data collected.

All my unconventional experiences have led me to realizing how to use my talents. Jamie Flink introduced me to account planning in *Management of Strategic Communications*. Account planning is exactly what I enjoy doing – using logical and analytical skills to consume and synthesize vast amounts of data, then using intuitive and qualitative research skills to interpret that data in an interesting way. Every experience I have had has led me to this professional

direction. My research courses speak for themselves, but my journalism experiences have taught me how to turn jargon and vast amount of information into something interesting and consumable for an audience. Similar to journalism, account planning is about serving the consumer or audience and giving them a voice. My project with Tyson Local Grain Services has allowed me to do similar work to what an account planner would do – conduct secondary and primary research, turn data into insights, and help create a strategic communication plan.

This report will elaborate on my experiences of both the successes and challenges of working with Tyson LGS and explore the research I conducted.

Chapter Two: Weekly Field Notes

June 4 – 8

Professional Component

- Completed compliance training
- Meeting with VML about branding/website redesign
 - Gained clearer direction about content creation and priorities
 - Compiled folder of Tyson LGS photos/videos/usable assets for VML
- Managed payments and organized tradeshow exhibits materials/advertisements/sponsorships
- Buy radio sponsorship package for Four State Farm Show
 - Write radio ad scripts for radio commercials
 - Approve produced radio commercials (KKOW) for Four State Farm Show
 - Develop script/key points for on-air radio interview
- Research about sustainability practices in row crop/farmers' barriers to adopt and develop survey questions about farmers and their current sustainability practices (company-wide effort)
- Meeting with Tyson Foods PR team about outreach programs
- Developed trade show goals and follow-up plan
- Developed trade show day-of plan/checklist for each upcoming event
- Narrow down four-state area farmers to send emails about tradeshow attendance
- Help buyers write script for commodity update video
- Write cold call letter (to be mailed next week) to prospective corn buyers in KS, OK, MO
- LGS items inventory and ordered more items in preparation for events
- Assess current marketing plan

Research Component

This was a slower week for my research as I needed to catch up on what projects the team was currently working on. I briefed the LGS team about my research. For the most part, I did more research on the diffusion of innovation and added more about it to my literature review. Beginning next week, I will start recruiting participants.

June 11 – 15

Professional Component

- Developed content calendar
- Create LGS ad with new Tyson Foods colors
- Billboard ad renewal in Sedalia
 - Developed new copy for billboard ads
- Send cold-call letters to KS, OK, MO corn farmers (WEST)

- Developed Global Insights commodity weekly update (Weekly internal "newsletter" with news that would impact the work we do, i.e. Trump trade wars.)
- Poultry Fest event this week (A week-long festival celebrating all things poultry). The office was very quiet with nearly every full-time employee out playing golf with our vendors. I attended the company dinners during the evenings with our vendors. Great networking opportunities.

Research Component

With the office empty, I was able to cross off all my research goals for the week. I started out with setting dates and times for the FGDs: Tuesday, June 26 at 4 p.m., Thursday, July 19 at 4 p.m., Monday, July 23 at 4 p.m., and Tuesday, August 14 at 11 a.m. Then, I reserved rooms at the Extension offices I proposed. I gathered a list of potential research participants for each location and created an Excel spreadsheet with their information on it so I can keep track of statuses. After fine-tuning and adding the times, dates, and location information to my recruitment emails, I sent it to my selected farmers. I will follow-up with phone calls on Monday. I also created a checklist of materials needed for each FGD and a schedule for each FGD. I created four boxes, one for each FGD, and put all the materials I needed in each. Lastly, because it was such slow week and the office was nearly empty (only the interns holding the fort), I conducted my pilot FGD. The discussion flowed nicely with only minor changes to the discussion guide – changing the order of a couple questions.

June 18 – 22

Professional Component

- Spent most of the week developing a PR campaign for Tyson LGS (I used everything I learned in Jon's PR class for this project. Thanks, Jon!)
- Spent the week researching and developing a branded storytelling treatment plan for Tyson LGS. This helps us determine the type of content we should develop/procure. Learned all of this from Jim Flink.
- Created plan for weekly market commentary videos.
 - Decided protocol; script writing, etc.
- Registered for Ag Media Summit (Goal is to go to two professional conferences every year). Thanks to Sharon, I received funding to travel to this conference.
- Met with VML and team to talk about project timeline.
- Met with VML individually to talk about content development and procurement this summer.

Research Component

Recruiting research participants is much harder when it's not Mizzou students. I called the Northeast Oklahoma farmers and found out farmers do not check their email regularly. All the farmers said they check their emails once every other week. I decided to wait another week to call the other farmers. The farmers I spoke to said the selected FGD date would not work for them. I decided to change the date and 5 out of 6 farmers accepted the invite. The new date is Monday, July 23 at 1 p.m.

June 25 – 29

Professional Component

- Met with VML again to talk about next steps/see what they've done so far
- Developing a creative brief to present for next week's meeting with VML's creative team.
- Secured radio advertising and interviews in target areas for harvest months
- We recently purchased a few elevators from The Andersons, another grain company. I've been making sure we claim those locations as ours online and changing it to our company name.
- Finalized new LGS ads
- I proposed to my manager that the LGS team start reading "The Five Dysfunctions of a Team" and discuss it together. This book is amazing for team building. At our weekly team meetings we'll discuss the book/do the team analysis.
- We also added new team members to the Commodity Purchasing Group as a whole. There are many new faces but no one really talks to each other. People don't know each other that well, so I rebooted "Breakfast Club," which is when people get randomly grouped into teams of three and cook/bring breakfast together for the team on Fridays.

Research Component

Things are looking up! I confirmed and recruited six research participants each for Northwest Arkansas and Sedalia farmers. I currently have three participants for Aurora right now. I went through and re-read some of the focus group readings from my qualitative research methods classes – just to refresh and prepare myself for moderating.

July 2 – 13

Professional Component

- I have been pretty swamped at work. My immediate supervisor, who is the only other person who does communication with me, has been assigned to work with corporate on a large sustainability project. I have been handling most of the communications by myself. It has been overwhelming. So, I reached out to one of our analysts to collaborate on the comms. plan and delegated some other work to the younger interns.
- Working with VML has been great! In the past two weeks, we've had three meetings with them about updates on the website and content creation.
- Speaking of VML, I sent my first creative brief over to them (excited, but nervous for their feedback). We have a meeting on Monday to discuss their inputs. The plan is for me to go out to our farms and gather all the content (interviews and photos). Although the journalism side of me is excited, it will be difficult to one-man band all of this while focusing on my research and other projects. I don't want to sacrifice quality either. I'm talking with VML if it is within the budget to get their creative team out to one of the farms to capture content instead.

- July is a very busy month for us. Most of our tradeshow are held during this month and we also visit most of our farmers while we're out traveling. Next week, I will be out of the office from Wednesday until Sunday. Along with the FGD, one of the corn buyers and I plan to visit several of our farmers (they like it when we meet them face-to-face), we are also visiting the feed mill, and at the end of the week there is a large farm show we are exhibiting at. The other interns helped me gather and prep all materials for this trip.
- We also have two other tradeshow in two weeks. They are in the east coast so we can't bring all our tradeshow materials out there on the plane. Since I'm out next week, one of the interns is helping me ship all the items out there.
- We attend a lot of tradeshow and spend thousands of dollars in exhibit expenses, advertising, tradeshow materials and travel costs. In the past, they would just attend the show and then come back. That's really inefficient and a waste of our money. I developed a robust tradeshow follow-up plan so we would get the most out of our money and be able to measure our return on investment. I purchased a survey system, Quick Tap Survey, to better capture our leads. I'm giving everyone who attends tradeshow a crash course on this follow-up plan on Monday.
- I was supposed to present the communications plan early next week, but July has been a busy month. I can't find a time where all the people I need to present to are in the office at the same time. So, I've pushed the presentation to the first week of August.
- On Friday mornings, in place of our team meetings, we have "Friday Education" where someone volunteers to teach the group about anything professional. I helped lead today's discussion with an Enneagram test, a popular personality test. I think it was insightful. Team members learned a lot about themselves and each other. I hope we can use what we've learned to play off each other's strengths and weaknesses, and work more efficiently.

Research Component

I conducted my first focus group discussion on Monday - it went exceptionally well! I did not have to worry about anyone not speaking up – everyone had something to say. At times, they would talk over one another. The only difficulty I had was keeping them on track. They have a short attention span and tend to start talking about other topics. For the most part, it was a stimulating discussion. After this FGD was finished, I debriefed with my scribe, wrote a summary of the discussion, transcribed the recording, and put the video file in my external hard drive. I will wait until all FGDs are complete before analyzing the data. I also gave each person a gift card for participating and had them fill out the MU gift card receipt form.

July 16 – 27

Professional Component

- For the first half of the week, I was out traveling in southwest Missouri and southeast Kansas. We spent an entire day visiting with farmers. There, I took a lot of pictures for VML and the new website, and did video interviews with a few farmers to gather content and testimonies. The day after, I conducted the focus group and then headed to Kansas for a three-day trade show.

- After the tradeshow, I followed the follow-up plan I created to increase vendors. It was pretty successful.
- Our group at Tyson will be the first one to integrate Drupal, a content management system. It will allow us to edit/add content whenever we want to. The most exciting part about this is that I was trained in Drupal when I was a graduate assistant with MU Health Care. While I was there, I helped build the new MU School of Medicine website on Drupal. With this background, I'm excited to help the group learn more about Drupal.
- Tuesday – Thursday, I went to Tennessee to attend a few meetings. Tyson is building a new complex there and we are trying to increase our presence. We met with the United Corn/Soybean Board, University of TN Extension office, and a lot of influential farmers in the area. We also attended a farm show (It was SO hot there).
 - I caught a bug sometime during these travels and got really sick on Thursday.

Research Component

I conducted my second focus group last week in Aurora. It went even better than the first one. One person called me the day before that he could not make it, so I called one of the back-up participants and, thankfully, he agreed to be part of the FGD. I've learned that some farmers don't really plan attending events that far ahead and would rather attend on a whim. The third FGD was held on Monday. One person did not show up and I didn't have enough time to call for a back-up, so I just conducted it with 5 people. At this point, I'm starting to see a lot of patterns in what the participants are saying. I'm excited to get the data collection finished and start analyzing! My last FGD is in Sedalia for August 14. I've confirmed from all 6 participants that they'll be there.

July 30 – August 17

Professional Component

- Followed up on prospective farmers from Four State Farm Show and Milan No-Till Field Day with emails and phone calls
- Met weekly with VML about website redesign updates
- Talked with VML (AE and creative team) about blog visions and content topics
- Developing a content strategy for LGS content creation
 - Developed an in-depth content calendar
 - Drafted emails to send to organizations we sponsor about content contributions
 - Researched corn growers association and farm bureaus for news release subscriptions; possible content fillers
 - Pulled all pertinent USDA report release dates; can publish on new blog/website
- Met with Tyson Foods corporate social media manager about making LGS Facebook public. It is incredibly difficult to launch public Facebook pages for business units here.
- Conference call with VML about website headers
- Edited LGS team bios
- Took updated head shots of LGS team

- Attended Ag Media Summit in Scottsdale
 - Pulled a lot of impactful information we can implement here, e.g., communicating with consumers in the digital space, tips for blogging effectively, changes and innovations within organizations, etc.
- Spent two weeks preparing for our Sedalia farmer trip which consisted of 8 farm visits, focus group, feed mill visit and a large dinner for farmers. There was a lot of emailing, calling and logistics involved.
- Went on the Sedalia trip and it was successful!
- Wrote a report on our findings about the feed mill operations from the Sedalia trip
- Wrote thank you cards to farmers
- Followed-up with freelance photographer and VML on the photo shoot in Sedalia
- Attended meetings the past three weeks. Several were about company and team goals, current projects, etc.
- Attended our second team book club meeting
- Developing communication packets for feed mills
- Help assess LGS sponsorships

Research Component

OFFICIALLY FINISHED WITH DATA COLLECTION. This is a pretty liberating feeling. I have all my recordings transcribed and plan on using this weekend to start analyzing my data.

August 20 – 24

Professional Component

- Completed weekly global insights newsletter
- Wrote and sent thank you cards to last group of farmers we visited for the summer
- Followed-up with VML team about blog, content, and photo shoot
- Transcribed testimonials for website use
- Meeting with a couple LGS team members and mill manager to get clarification on some questions we had during the Sedalia farm visit
- Ordered gifts for our Tyson sustainability survey pre-testers
- Met with LGS team members to discuss LGS FY19 projections and LGS marketing/communications plan, prioritized key areas to focus on for FY19
- Updated communications plan
- Worked on LGS content strategy
- Weekly meeting with VML on website updates
- Sent all invoices to manager
- Worked with supervisor on a project, creating informative LGS packets for our feed mills - trying to improve communications with feed mills
- Met with VML on Thursday to discuss outstanding copy/content
- Wrote LGS video market commentary script

Research Component

Still analyzing my data. I haven't ran into any issues...yet. If I do, I'll let you all know.

August 27 – 31

Professional Component

- Sent more content to VML for new website
- Reviewed new blog design with VML
- Review photos taken by hired photographer with VML
- Assessed radio ad performance
- Worked with HR manager on Mizzou CAFNR Career Fair show; Tyson Foods attending
- Trade shows
 - Review/apply for new shows
 - Estimate total cost per show
 - Determine what advertisements are needed
- Notified farmers about labor day schedule for feed mills and corporate office
 - Sent LGS messages
- Sent gifts to survey pre-testers
- Worked on LGS content development/strategy
- Meeting with LGS team, discussed again priority areas to target for FY19

Research Component

Still analyzing the data. I haven't had much time this week to spend on my research - work has been taking up a lot of time. However, I should be finished with a couple of my projects after Labor Day weekend, freeing up more time to work on my research.

September 3 – 21

Professional Component

- Put together LGS FY19 communications plan presentation
- Presented the LGS plan to LGS team and leadership (Finally)! Received good feedback from them.
- Wrote the script for weekly market commentary video, uploaded to website
- Had a meeting with our freelance videographer to discuss creating educational videos educating farmers about our grain contract types and how to best use them to market their grain successfully
 - Wrote the first script draft for the video
- Emailed VML for screenshots of new website/blog site
- We are on track to launch the new website in mid-October. It was supposed to be early October, but we are integrating content management system, Drupal, and it's taking longer.
- Helped a teammate develop a payment survey to see if we can speed up payments for farmers. Emailed payment survey to farmers and called them as a follow-up
- Applied to two trade shows: Sunbelt Ag Expo in Georgia and Oklahoma Ag Expo.
- Worked on Sunbelt Ag Expo social media campaign, what kind of content, call to action, etc.
- Led the book discussion at this past week's book club/team meeting

- Worked on content calendar for the month: what content are we publishing, creating and why
- Wrote a harvest article for blog with harvest safety tips, important delivery reminders and highlighting the LGS app.
- Took inventory of LGS trade show materials
- Ordered new materials for trade shows with the updated logo on all items.
- Worked on new LGS Facebook page. Corporate gave the thumbs up on it and am transferring content from old Facebook group to the page.

Research Component

I have been bad about dedicating time to my research. I did not look at it last week but categorized and coded some of the data this week. Work has been draining me. Because of this, I am cutting my hours down to 30 hrs/week starting next week so I can commit more time to my research. I have talked to my supervisor about it and she agrees this is best. I created a timeline with deadlines on when I need to finish sections of the research paper. I'm working with Heather on when to send her drafts as well. Right now, I am on track to finish before Thanksgiving Break. I will have more and better details about my research after next week.

September 24 – 28

Professional Component

- Changed/added tactics to LGS marketing and communications plan
- Continued working on Sunbelt social campaign
- FB meeting with supervisor
- Working with freelance videographer to create educational videos about different marketing contracts for farmers
- Compiled all content written by our analysts from August 1 to present, prep to publish so we have enough content when we launch website
- Created Google MyBusiness account for Tyson LGS to claim all businesses (Feed mills/elevators)
 - Waiting for verification code via mail
- Published more old content to new FB page and backdated all, i.e. all LGS videos, updates, etc.
- LGS Video, wrote script, uploaded to LGS website
- Developed Harvest photo contest campaign
 - Wrote mailer content, i.e. instructions and official rules
- Pulling farmer contact information for prospective Oglethorpe farmers from Google

Research Component

Continuing with analysis.

October 1 – 5

Professional Component

- Pulled more contact information for Oglethorpe area farmers
- Added more content to new FB page
- Helped write LGS video script
- Go through all new LGS vendor forms, record referral methods for 200+ new vendors
- Took off Friday to work on research
- Acquired a new elevator and working to communicate with farmers about the acquisition and what they can expect
 - Letter mail merge for vendors we acquired, sent letters to new farmers
 - Sent emails to suppliers
- Launch harvest photo contest
 - Worked with Tyson printing services on mailers, this took much longer than expected
 - Worked with customer service representatives on logistics with prizes (Prizes are Tyson Foods meat products)
- Launched new FB
 - Add old content to new Facebook page
 - Add new content
 - Created video cover
 - Notify closed FB group about deleting, and liking new page
- Finished Sunbelt social campaign
- Meeting with VML on website timeline, had to push launch date to November
- Still working on GoogleMyBusiness account and claiming recent acquisition addresses
 - This is a much harder process than I thought
- Cleaned up YouTube page, fixed thumbnails and added description
 - Add closed captions: in progress
- Reading new book for book club
- Re-group breakfast club teams for round two
- Talking with corporate brand PR and internal communications about repurposing some internal news stories that are fitting for our audience
- Updated content calendar
- Fixed hours and phone numbers of new elevator on website
- Preparing for upcoming trade show in two weeks

Research Component

Continuing with analysis.

October 8 – 12

Professional Component

- Monday: Out of office, working on thesis
- Pack and sent trade show materials to Sunbelt Ag Expo in Georgia

- Finalized details
- Printed out packets and forms we need for show
- Created document with all important information we need for the show
- Created new form on iPad to capture leads at trade show
- Finalized social media campaign, in contact with Sunbelt media coordinator
- Monitored Facebook and contest
- Downloaded pictures from VML, converted them to jpps.
- Promoted FB page to target locations for 10 days
- Finished pulling contact information for prospective farmers in southern Georgia
 - Holding off on sending mail packets to these prospects due to Hurricane Michael. Bad timing.
- Blasted LGS message about photo contest
- Published CWU Feed ingredients to blog, shared on FB
 - Working on finding contributors to add content to website
- Scheduled content calendar for this week and next week
- Planning for next month's trade shows and campaigns
- Meeting with LGS team about text blast options
- Met with videographer to discuss next steps on educational videos
 - Write another script for new quote

Research Component

I finished writing my intro, lit review, methods and part of my findings. I will send Heather drafts at the end of the week.

October 15 – 19

Professional Component

- Traveled to Georgia and attended Sunbelt Ag Expo

Research Component

N/A

October 22 – November 2

Professional Component

- Took personal time off

Research Component:

Finished writing all components of research analysis.

November 5 – 9

Professional Component

- Conducted a brief social listening of Tyson LGS and found a couple problems with feed mill listings on Google, fixing them this week and next week

- Worked on Tulsa Farm Show, preparation
 - Tyler, Eric and I will be attending on Dec. 5 – 8.
 - Working on goals and plan for the show
- Followed-up on Sunbelt campaign/show
- VML user testing meetings
- Got access to new/testing LGS internal dashboard. Fixing and editing internal LGS FAQs, answers
- Started working on Christmas gifts for farmers, gather top farmers and contact information
- Added referral methods to ongoing Excel sheet, keeps track of our advertising/outreach efforts
- Produce audio testimonials for new website

Research Component

Put together pieces of the entire project report.

Chapter Three: Evaluation Of Project And Self

The entirety of this project has been a professional and personal growing experience. My time with Tyson Foods has allowed me to wear many different communications hats, which came with challenges and advantages. I interned for Tyson Foods and worked on the Local Grain Services team the summer before graduate school, which gave me a head start in understanding the business model and pain points. The team only had one person handling marketing and communications for a business that was increasingly becoming more successful at a faster pace than most of the people had anticipated. When I joined the team as an intern, we were doing more reactive marketing and communications work rather than strategic and planned out work because of the lack of manpower. This, along with my appreciation for the work the team and company does, and the potential I saw in this business led me back to team for my professional project. My initial goals for this project were to develop a holistic strategic communications plan with an in-depth understanding of our situation, competitors, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats and key differentiators, and to develop blog posts. This was an ambitious goal to undertake without a larger communications team and while I had to balance other tasks, but I was determined.

The communications plan took me longer than expected because of all the research I had to do. It would be a lie if I said I wasn't nervous about doing the plan alone – making me the sole accountable person if something went wrong. I have always feared this, which is why I took longer to conduct thorough research. After the research came the fun part: goals, objectives, strategies and tactics. I collaborated with a lot of different people to accomplish this part as I

needed their input, which reminded me how much I enjoyed working in groups. While I like working individually and independently, the benefits of working in a group and bouncing ideas off of each other outweigh the latter.

During this time, there were also many different tasks and projects going on, including traveling to farm shows, visiting farmers and hosting dinners, creating advertisements and small campaigns for the farm shows, and helping with the new website redesign. I learned an abundant amount about event planning while in this role. I handled most of the farm and trade show visits, and always paired them up with farm visits and dinners to save us traveling time. The work that goes behind-the-scenes in getting registered and set up for shows is unbelievably time consuming. There were days where I was committed to preparing for a show for the entire day, which included registration, getting materials and equipment ready, and deciding on advertisement opportunities and creating those. Early on, I noticed a couple problems with how we were approaching farm shows. First, farm shows were heavily used, even before I joined the team, to increase brand awareness and find more corn farmers. This became very expensive because shows can typically cost a couple thousand dollars, excluding travel expenses. Second, we were coming back from these shows empty-handed. There were no prospective farmers or their contact information; there was no way to measure our return on investment. This concerned me. We needed to justify if a show was worth our time and money, and there was no way to figure that out at the time. I decided to create a way to measure ROI, collect information from prospective farmers at every show, and developed a protocol to follow-up with farmers. This has proved to be successful.

While attending these shows, I always scheduled farm visits and farmer dinners the day before or after. Based on previous surveys we sent out, farmers said they felt a disconnection

with us and wanted to meet us face-to-face. At least one month before our visits, I would have to work with our corn buyer to select farmers to visit, make phone calls and schedule the trip. This was more tedious than I anticipated. I always scheduled farm visits strategically. For instance, if our hotel was on the west side of the region and we were coming in from the east, I would make sure we never back tracked ourselves. I scheduled visits based on the farm's locations and had to do more math than I wanted to. We were always right on time or a little early. These visits proved to be helpful. Farmers always seemed to appreciate that we made an effort to visit them and listen to their concerns. I also took these visits as an opportunity to capture pictures and testimonies for future use. Dinner events were just as overwhelming as I had to deal with finding a venue, choosing the menu, sending invites, keeping track of RSVP and attending the dinners. I always enjoyed the dinners as it was a good way to show our appreciation for the farmers, but there was a lot of work that went into it. I did not have prior experience in any of this and learned on the spot, which I appreciate because I now have a new set of skills.

The website redesign was an exciting project to be part of. The old website was very outdated, limiting and not user-friendly. We worked with advertising agency, VML, on this project, and there were many high and low points during the process. While I was part of the entire process and sat in almost all the meetings, my main responsibility was focused on content creation. We wanted to start publishing more content and add a news section to the website. I never knew the amount of work that went into creating and launching a new website until this project. While I won't go in-depth about all that went into this, I will talk more about the content section. During the middle of the summer, I sat in on several meetings about what kind of pictures we wanted on the website. The current pictures VML showed us were stock images and were expensive. Because I was working on all the content, my team had asked me if I could take

photos during farm visits instead. I was nervous because I was not trained in photography nor I was a professional – at the most I was an amateur. I was honest with them and told them “I’m not a good photographer, but I’ll do it.” I didn’t think I could say no. I wish I would have just said “No, please hire a professional photographer instead” because it would have saved us some time and money. I returned from the farm visits with only a handful of good photos. I was not confident in my ability to continue taking photos, so we hired a freelance photographer to join us on farm visits and he did a much better job than I could have ever done. After the photos were finished, we talked about how we wanted the news section to look like. I was able to visualize how I wanted the news section to look like based on usability and friendliness, and VML took the visions and created an amazing page. The new problem I faced was that there was no articles or stories to publish.

There were a few things that factored into the lack of articles and stories produced. I had spent so much time on creating a communications plan, planning and going to farm shows and farm visits, conducting my focus group discussions, completing daily tasks, and helping with the new website that it left very little time to focus on producing content. In addition, I remember sitting at my desk thinking, “Why are we creating content? What is the strategy behind this? What are we getting out of this?” This raised a red flag for me and I knew I needed a good reason to justify why we should be spending time and money on this. I turned to what I learned in Jim Flink’s Branded Storytelling class to solve this problem. I created a content marketing treatment plan. A treatment plan helps justify why you should create content, what type of content to create, identifies your specific audience and their unmet emotional need, and helps you figure out how you’ll execute the plan. What makes this plan even stronger and better is that it is all based on data, which meant I was confident in the plan but had to do some more

secondary research. It took me awhile, but I figured out our audience, corn farmers, were education seekers. We needed to create content that taught them about a variety of issues including marketing their grain, using chicken litter on their fields, sustainability practices, etc. While we had a purpose and plan for content creation, we still didn't have any content.

My time with Tyson Foods was coming to a close as my contract was ending, and I was also applying for jobs at the same time. My team offered me a job to keep doing what I was doing. I chose to stay for several reasons but one of the reasons was because I felt like I worked so hard to help strategize the communications and content but would not be there to help execute it or see the successes of it. Since I have joined the team full-time, my focuses and goals are on executing the plans, and producing articles and stories.

I feel like a jack of all trades in this position, which can be good at times but makes me want to focus on one specific aspect. I have found it to be in research and strategy, but because of my past experiences in journalism I can also extend my skills to meet our content goals. I enjoy wearing different hats and having my days be completely different, which is hard to find in corporate communications. Personally, I have learned a wealth of lessons and grown from this experience. My office is filled with mostly financial-minded people, e.g. traders, analysts, IT. While I enjoy being around them and learning how they process information, it has been challenging especially with the work I do. I was so used to working with people who came from a communications background, and bouncing ideas and talking about my work. However, I found it challenging to discuss my work and ideas with others in the office because they come from a different background. I eventually learned how to present ideas to them but still did not have a lot of creative minds to talk about strategies or story ideas with. I got out of my comfort zone and networked with the entire corporate brand communications team along with the new vice

president of communications. It proved to be beneficial. I felt like I was whole again and had a team of creatives I could talk to. In addition, since we lacked manpower and resources, this will be beneficial for us moving forward.

Overall, I believe this project became more than I ever expected it to be. I feel as if I produced work that I can be proud of, and work that will impact the business and farmers positively and profoundly. This project and position with Tyson Foods has taught me so much more about myself, my abilities, and the work I could produce if I utilize all my strengths and understand my weaknesses. I look forward to continue elevating the brand and business, and developing meaningful work.

Chapter Four: Project Physical Evidence

Project Evidence of Work

The text box for each piece of evidence provides a 1-3 sentence description of the project. Some of the projects are not provided in full due to them being proprietary, private and internal information at Tyson Foods, Inc.

Tyson LGS FY19 Communications Plan (presentation version)

Harvest social media campaign

New Facebook page

Tradeshow follow-up plan

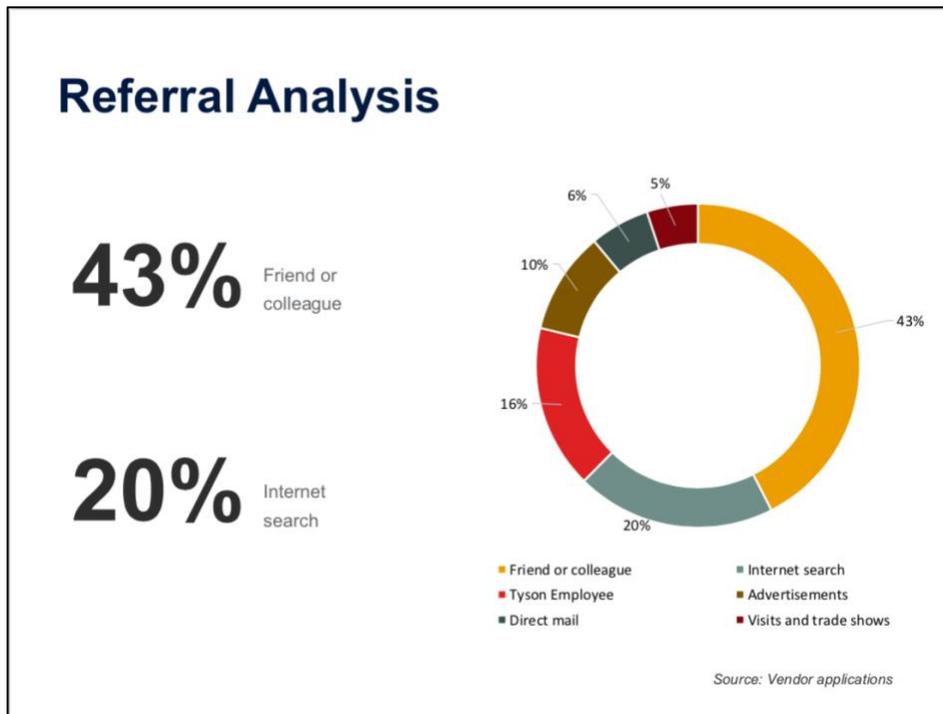
Commodity Weekly Update: Global Insights

Market commentary video scripts

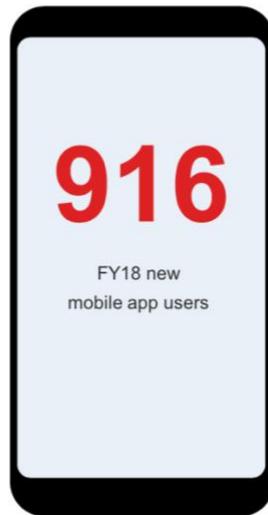
Example of mailer invites for events

Tyson LGS FY19 Communications Plan (presentation version)

I developed the FY19 communications plan after a few months of researching and examining previous efforts. Below are slides from the presentation – the full plan cannot be published.



Mobile App Usage



**As of September 13, 2018
Source: Tyson LGS Weekly Reports*

Visits/Events, Big Impact

108	new Arkansas vendors from AR Ag Council and visits
96	new vendors after 2017 & 2018 Four State Farm Show
46	new vendors added to LGS from Sedalia area
900,000+	bushels contracted since summer Sedalia farm visit

*Source: Vendor application and
Tyson LGS Weekly Reports*

Goal

To help Tyson LGS retain current vendors and gain new vendors.

5

Objectives



West and East Feed Mills

Increase vendors in the West and East by 25% each.



Website

Increase external website traffic and engagement by 25% from day of new website launch until one year after.



Engagement

Increase LGS engagement in each mill area and elevators through trade show or targeted sponsorship.



Referrals

Increase vendors referred by friends or colleagues by 50%.

Objective 1

Increase vendor numbers in the West and East by 25% each.



Strategy

Target West corn farmers in Four State Area (Sedalia, Aurora, Springdale, Siloam Springs, Pine Bluff, Westville, Oklahoma) and Gonzales.

Target East farmers in Crewe, Union, Bolivar and Oglethorpe

Objective 2

Increase LGS engagement in each mill area and elevators through trade show or targeted sponsorship.



Strategy

Sponsor one farmer-focused event or organization and/or attend one trade show in each non-priority feed mill area. And establish presence with the help of elevator grain originators and under the principles of the new sponsor and partner guide.

Objective 3

Increase external website traffic and engagement by 25% from day of new website launch until one year after.



Strategy

Redesign website and develop/procure content.

Objective 4

Increase vendors referred by friends or colleagues by 50%.



Strategy

Establish referral opportunities and engage with vendors throughout the year.



Tyson Foods Local Grain Services

Colors

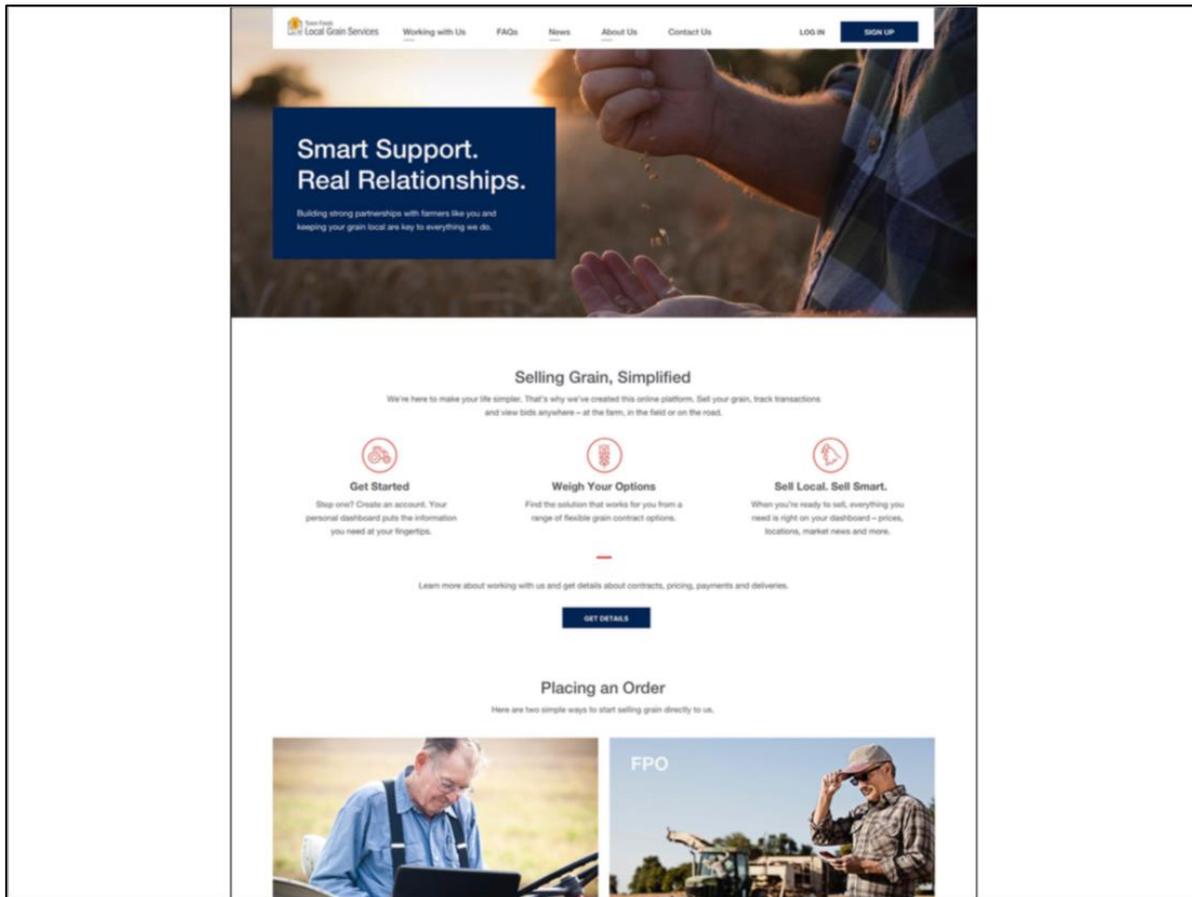
Primary Palette

Primary colors are used throughout the site for text, background and graphic elements. All type and background colors must pass for ADA "AA" compliance.



Secondary Palette

Secondary colors are used for interaction states, such as rollover, active or disabled.

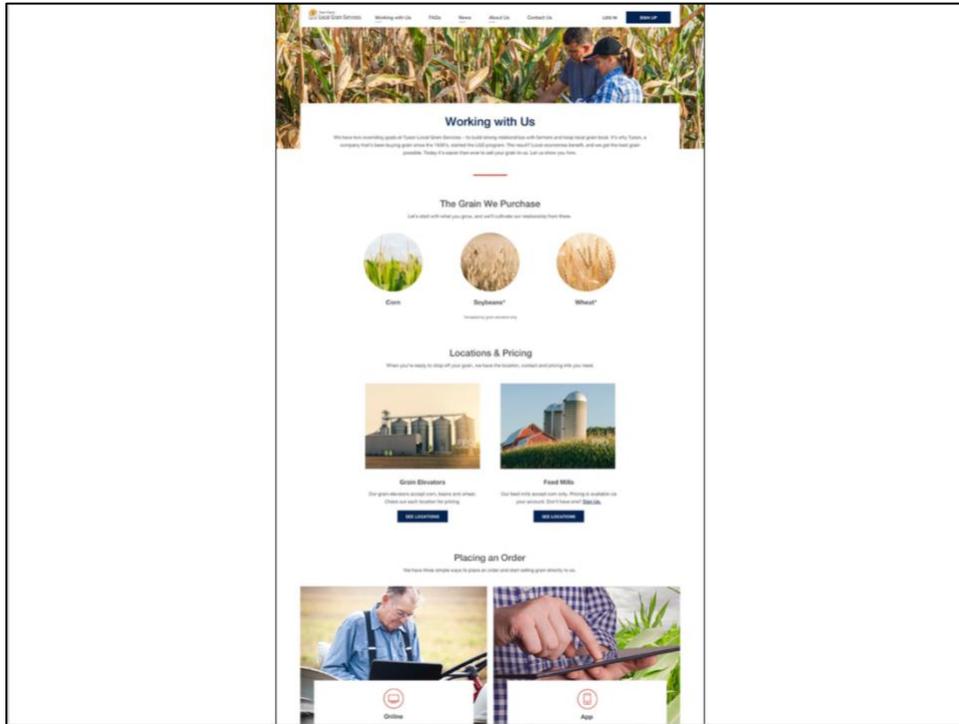
The screenshot shows the website's layout. At the top is a navigation bar with links for 'Working with Us', 'FAQs', 'News', 'About Us', and 'Contact Us', along with 'LOG IN' and 'SIGN UP' buttons. The main header features a large image of a person's hands holding grain, with a blue overlay containing the text 'Smart Support. Real Relationships.' and a sub-headline 'Building strong partnerships with farmers like you and keeping your grain local are key to everything we do.'

The main content area is titled 'Selling Grain, Simplified' and includes the text: 'We're here to make your life simpler. That's why we've created this online platform. Set your grain, track transactions and view bids anywhere -- at the farm, in the field or on the road.'

Below this are three columns of content, each with an icon and a title:

- Get Started**: Step one? Create an account. Your personal dashboard puts the information you need at your fingertips.
- Weigh Your Options**: Find the solution that works for you from a range of flexible grain contract options.
- Sell Local. Sell Smart.**: When you're ready to sell, everything you need is right on your dashboard -- prices, locations, market news and more.

A 'GET DETAILS' button is positioned below these columns. Further down, the section 'Placing an Order' is introduced with the text: 'Here are two simple ways to start selling grain directly to us.' This section contains two images: one of a man in a blue shirt looking at a laptop, and another of a man in a plaid shirt and hat looking at a tablet, with the text 'FPO' overlaid on the second image.



Measurement and Evaluation



West and East Feed Mills

Record vendor numbers from each the West and East on September 30, 2018 and compare to vendor numbers on September 30, 2019.



Website

Collect Google analytics of web page traffic from end of FY18 through end of FY19.



Engagement

If engagement was through a trade show, record the number of leads collected and current farmers met.



Referrals

Analyze referral answers on vendor applications.

Harvest social media campaign

This was the first social media campaign for Tyson LGS. It was launched shortly after corporate allowed the subsidiary to have a public page. This was intended to garner more followers and awareness.

2018 Local Harvest Photo Contest Campaign Plan

Executive Summary

This six-week long harvest photo contest campaign will help increase traffic to Tyson LGS' new Facebook page, and ultimately increase engagement among current vendors and increase awareness. Direct mailers will complement the main social media campaign – increasing the chances for more participation. Post cards with the photo contest details will be sent along with a small paper banner in which vendors are encouraged to use when taking their photos for the contest.

To enter the contest, participants must post the photo to their own Facebook page with the hashtag #LocalHarvest, tag our Facebook page @TysonLGS and “like” the new Tyson LGS Facebook page. This increases our awareness as participants' friends will likely see the post and our business name attached to it. Additionally, this creates an automatic archival and makes it easy to track the campaign.

The campaign will run between October 8 – November 17 with one winner selected each week for a total of six winners. Each winner will receive an LGS prize consisting of one 10-pound frozen box of Tyson Foods Fully Cooked Original Chicken Tenderloins or one 16-pound frozen Hillshire Fully Cooked Boneless Traditional Smoked Ham Pit. The prizes also promote our overall parent brand, Tyson Foods. Selecting a weekly winner increases momentum and encourages participants to keep posting photos.

Situational Analysis

- Harvest has begun for many of our farmers already but will continue throughout November. We will use this time to position Tyson Foods Local Grain Services as a top-of-mind business and engage with our communities.
- Tyson LGS will launch its new website and Facebook page at the beginning of October. Driving traffic to these platforms and building our audience is no easy feat but is crucial to maintain and develop business relationships.

Target Audience

- Primary: Tyson LGS vendors – typically men 30+
- Secondary: Non-Tyson LGS vendors – friends of corn farmers selling to us who will likely see the photos on their Facebook newsfeed.
- Geographical Area: Tyson Foods LGS' 33+ locations
- Budget: ~\$1,500

Personas

- Charles:
 - Charles has been farming for 15 years by himself. He typically takes his young sons out to the fields with him when harvesting to show them the importance of hard work and their livelihood. Charles is tech-savvy and uses his smartphone to do business, research, and communicate with loved ones. He enjoys capturing photos of his sons and his fields and showing off his hard work.
- Adam and Kim
 - Adam and Kim have farmed for the past 35 years in the same community they both grew up in. While Adam is not comfortable with technology, Kim is constantly on her phone or desktop catching up with their kids and grandkids through Facebook. She is the link between the internet and Adam and keeps him informed with what she finds.

Differentiators/Key Strengths

- Localized strategy – hyperlocal
- Research indicates farmers trust other farmers more when it comes to introduction of new services ([Shaw](#)). Based on an analysis of Tyson LGS referrals, 43% of vendors reported “friend or colleague” as how they heard about Tyson LGS. The leading factor in LGS’ prospect’s decision-making process is advocacy from their trusted sources. This is a huge opportunity to harness the power of our brand advocates to get more quality referrals.

Promotional Plan Goals

This promotional campaign will support the FY19 LGS Strategic Communications goal to engage with current vendors and increase new vendors.

- Goal 1: Improve engagement with current LGS corn farmers
- Goal 2: Support the overall strategic growth initiative

Key Messages

Harness Tyson LGS’ local strategy and its name.

- **#LocalHarvest:**
 - Show us what your local harvest looks like. LGS vendors are proud of where they come from. This gives them an opportunity to show off their local community and hard work and allows us to highlight them.
 - Using a hashtag will allow for automatic archival of this campaign and lets other people track these photos.

Creative Strategy

- Theme: #LocalHarvest

#LocalHarvest Contest

Share your harvest photo with us on Facebook @TysonLGS from October 7 - November 17, 2018 for your chance to win a Tyson LGS prize pack.

Three Easy Steps to Enter:

1. Take a harvest photo.
2. Post the photo on Facebook with the hashtag #LocalHarvest and mention @TysonLGS.
3. Like our Tyson LGS Facebook page [Link FB page] for winner announcements and to view other local harvest photos.

Don't have a Facebook account? That's okay. Email [Link email account] your photo to us with the subject line, Local Harvest contest, and include your name, address and phone number.

View the latest photo entries at xxx [Link hashtag FB URL]

View Official Rules on our website. [Link website]

- Direct mail
 - Send all vendors a post card with the photo contest details along with a 5"x14" banner, and instructions on how to use it. Vendors are encouraged to take their harvest photos with the banner which says, "Keeping local gain local in _____." Vendors can fill out the blank space with their hometown, e.g., "Keeping local grain local in Springdale, Arkansas." The Tyson LGS logo and #LocalHarvest hashtag will be prominently placed on the banner.



-
- Example:





-
- Social media
 - Vendors must use the hashtag, #LocalHarvest, and tag @TysonLGS on Facebook, and “like” our new Facebook page to enter.
- CTA:
 - Post a harvest photo on Facebook and like new Tyson LGS Facebook page.

Timeline

- Weekly Prize Winners: Tyson LGS will randomly select one winner from all eligible entries received that week to be a weekly winner. Prizes will be awarded every Monday starting on October 15, 2018 and the last drawing will be on November 19, 2018.
 1. The first weekly prize period begins on October 8, 2018 (00:00:01, CT) and ends October 13, 2018 (11:59:59, CT) [Week 1 winner announced on October 15];
 2. The second weekly prize period begins on October 14, 2018 (00:00:01, CT) and ends October 20, 2018 (11:59:59, CT) [Week 2 winner announced on October 22];
 3. The third weekly prize period begins on October 21, 2018 (00:00:01, CT) and ends October 27, 2018 (11:59:59, CT) [Week 3 winner announced on October 29];
 4. The fourth weekly prize period begins on October 28, 2018 (00:00:01, CT) and ends November 3, 2018 (11:59:59, CT) [Week 4 winner announced on November 5];
 5. The fifth weekly prize period begins on November 4, 2018 (00:00:01, CT) and ends November 10, 2018 (11:59:59, CT) [Week 5 winner announced on November 12];
 6. The sixth weekly prize period begins on November 11, 2018 (00:00:01, CT) and ends November 17, 2018 (11:59:59, CT) [Week 6 winner announced on November 19].

Measurement

- Campaign-Focused Metrics, Facebook
 - Track engagement on #LocalHarvest posts
 - Track reach: Measure the average fan reach of each photo, which determines how many people saw the photo with our hashtag and @TysonLGS.
 - Track how many photos were posted with the hashtag #LocalHarvest
- ❖ **Engagement:** 152 Likes, 8 Comments, 17 Shares, 21 entries
- ❖ **Awareness/Total reach:** 3,416
- ❖ Conclusion
 - Our goals were to increase awareness and engagements. More than 3,000 Facebook users were exposed to posts with our hashtag and link to our Facebook page. We can build on this foundation in future initiatives, nurture relationships with these participants and continue to increase awareness of our service.

New Facebook page

After presenting the facts and data why Tyson LGS needed a public Facebook page, corporate communications allowed us to finally launch a page. Before creating the page and transferring content from the closed Facebook group, I developed a Facebook strategy document with our goal and purpose, guidelines for content, added to corporate's response guidelines, and developed an Excel template to track Facebook analytics. While I cannot publish the strategy and guidelines, below are a couple screenshots of the [page](#).

The screenshot displays the Facebook page for Tyson Foods Local Grain Services. The page layout includes a top navigation bar with the company name and search bar, and a secondary navigation bar with options like Page, Ad Center, and Inbox. The main content area features a large image of a combine harvester in a field, with interaction buttons (Liked, Following, Share) and a 'Learn More' button. The 'About' section is divided into several categories: GENERAL (Category: Agricultural Service, Name: Tyson Foods Local Grain Services, Username: @TysonLGS), HOURS (Open Now 7:00 AM - 5:00 PM), BUSINESS INFO (Started in December 2015, This Page represents a corporate office or headquarters), and CONTACT INFO (Call (844) 816-8579, m.me/TysonLGS, localgrainservices@tyson.com, https://localgrainservices.tyson.com/). A 'STORY' section titled 'We value relationships' describes the LGS program and its focus on building relationships with farmers. A 'TEAM MEMBERS' section lists people who manage the page.

Tyson Foods Local Grain Services

Page Ad Center Inbox Notifications Insights Publishing To... Settings Help

Tyson Foods Local Grain Services

Tyson Foods Local Grain Services
@TysonLGS

- Home
- About
- Posts
- Photos
- Videos
- Events
- Community
- Info and Ads
- Promote
- Manage Promotions

Liked Following Share

TYSONLGS.BLOGSPOT.COM
Feed Ingredients Report: Week Ending Nov. 9 2018
Feed Ingredients Report: Week Ending Nov. 9 2018 Get link Facebook...

41 people reached Boost Post

Like Comment Share

Tyson Foods Local Grain Services
Published by Tyson Grain (P) · November 12 at 3:57 PM ·

Cara Cornutt from Alabama is our week 5 #LocalHarvest winner with a drone footage of corn harvest at Cornutt Farms, LLC.
Harvest may be wrapping up or already over for most of you, but it's not too late to submit your #LocalHarvest photos! Submit them by Saturday for a final chance to win Tyson Foods Fully Cooked Chicken Tenders or a Hillshire Fully Cooked Boneless Smoked Pit Ham - just in time for the holiday.
View Official Rules: <https://tysonlgs.blogspot.com/.../share-your-localharvest-pho...>

1,205 people reached Boost Post

Diana Hernandez, Dan Williams and 44 others · 3 Comments 5 Shares

Like Comment Share

Oldest

View 1 more comment

Learn More

Visitor Posts

Be the first to add a post.
Create Post

English (US) · Español · Português (Brasil) · Français (France) · Deutsch

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Tradeshow follow-up plan

The tradeshow follow-up was developed after realizing thousands of dollars were being spent on this, but there was not a way to measure return on investment.

- **(Potential new vendors)**
 - Before going to tradeshow, know an estimated number of people/prospects attending (Tradeshow directors normally have numbers from previous shows.)
 - Every farmer you talk to, whether they are interested or not in LGS, have them fill out the contact form on Quick Tap Survey.
 - Segment prospects into separate groups during tradeshow: hot, lukewarm or cold leads. This allows us to create an effective and unique follow-up experience.
 - **Hot leads:** Ready to do business with us.
 - PLAN:
 - Follow-up with email after tradeshow
 - Add them to the monthly newsletter list (Whenever we get this running.)
 - Follow-up with a phone call no longer than a week after tradeshow if no action has been made via initial email.
 - Once they are on board, invite to join closed FB group, follow blog
 - **Lukewarm leads:** Interested, but not 100% on board or not the decision-maker.
 - PLAN:
 - Because they gave us their contact info, chances are they still remember us.
 - Send one email once a week for a month.
 - WK1: Generic email (Directing them to website/to apply)
 - WK2: Send a blog story about a farmer (Customer proof: How our service is unique and helpful for farmers) (Directing them to website/to apply)
 - WK3: Direct email inviting them to sell to Tyson LGS/start application
 - **Cold leads:** Not yet interested, but still gave us their contact information
 - PLAN:
 - Needs more marketing magic
 - Follow-up with generic email, (Directing them to website/to apply)
 - Snail mail marketing material (Flyers, business cards)

Commodity Weekly Update: Global Insights

Commodity Weekly Update is a weekly newsletter distributed internally to keep stakeholders informed about pertinent issues affecting commodities. One topic within the newsletter was global news that could affect the markets. The majority of the stories were pulled straight from Reuters. Below are a handful of examples.

GLOBAL INSIGHTS

COMMODITY PURCHASING GROUP
 06.11.2018



G7 SUMMIT CLASH, ESCALATION OF POTENTIAL TRADE WARS

Over the weekend, President Donald Trump attended a divisive G7 Summit in Canada. He suggested the United States was footing too much of the costs of NATO. Canada Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said his country is not going to be "pushed around" when it comes to trade and plans to hit the U.S. back with its own tariffs. Trump responded by withdrawing support for a G7 communique. German Chancellor Angela Merkel said Europe will also implement counter-measures against U.S. tariffs on steel and aluminum just like Canada. However, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that U.S. relations with other G7 countries would continue to move forward, despite the weekend clash. Some U.S. officials are worried about the possibility of Trump moving toward an even greater "protectionist" trade policy leading to a full-blown global trade war.

TRUMP-KIM SUMMIT MEETING TODAY



President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un arrived in Singapore on Sunday for the first ever face-to-face meeting by leaders of two countries that have been enemies since the 1950-1953 Korean War. The leaders are set to meet today at 9 p.m. ET, or Tuesday 9 a.m. Singapore time, to narrow differences on how to end a nuclear stand-off on the Korean peninsula. Trump is hoping to get North Korea to put down its nuclear weapons. The main concern is whether the U.S. and North Korea have the same definition of "denuclearization." Singapore is reportedly spending about \$20 million (\$15 million) to host the summit and provide security. Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said the cost is worth it.

U.S. AND RUSSIAN OIL SUPPLIES GROW, PRICES DIP

The U.S.'s highest oil drilling activity in more than three years along with Russia's rising oil production caused prices to fall. Analysts expect higher U.S. output to offset supply curbs by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), which have been in place for 18 months and have pushed up prices significantly over the past year. Markets are worried by falling supply from Venezuela and the potential of lower exports from Iran. Falling Venezuelan production is contributed to sanctions, economic crisis and mismanagement, while Iran faces sanctions from the U.S. over its nuclear program. OPEC, along with some non-OPEC producers including Russia, started withholding output in 2017 to try to end a global supply glut and support prices. OPEC and its partners are due to meet June 22-23 in Vienna.

SUICIDE BOMBER KILLS 13 OUTSIDE AFGHAN MINISTRY

A government spokesman said 13 people were killed and 25 wounded by a suicide bomber during rush hour on Monday at the entrance to Afghanistan's rural rehabilitation and development ministry in Kabul. The attack comes as security has deteriorated in the city during recent months ahead of elections scheduled for October. The Islamic State claimed responsibility without providing any evidence but security officials say the attack may be the work of the Haqqani network, a group affiliated with the Taliban.

GLOBAL INSIGHTS

COMMODITY PURCHASING GROUP
 06.18.2018



Trump sets \$50 billion in China tariffs, Beijing strikes back

China responds to Trump's \$50 billion tariff by imposing 25 percent tariffs on 659 U.S. products, ranging from soybeans and autos to seafood. Both countries are heading toward open trade conflict after several failed negotiations to resolve U.S. complaints over Chinese industrial policies, lack of market access in China and a \$375 billion U.S. trade deficit.

The tariffs will go into effect "after a public comment period," Reuters notes. The Trump administration said companies will be able to apply for exclusions for Chinese imports they cannot source elsewhere.

U.S. soybean futures plunged 1.5 percent to a one-year low on concerns that an escalating trade fight with China will threaten shipments to the biggest buyer of the oilseed, traders said. Specifically, Iowa agriculture is caught in the crossfire, with farmers selling \$1.4 billion in soybeans to China last year, its top export market. Iowa farmers could lose up to \$624 million, depending on how long the tariffs are in place and the speed producers can find new markets for their soybeans, said Chad Hart, an Iowa State University economist.

Trump has also triggered a trade fight with Canada, Mexico and the European Union over steel and aluminum and has threatened to impose duties on European cars.

South Korea, U.S. expected to suspend major military drills following Trump-Kim meeting



South Korea and the United States are expected to announce the suspension of "large-scale" military drills this week, Reuters reports. However, they would restart if North Korea failed to keep its promise to denuclearize.

A South Korean news agency said the suspension was likely to affect only major joint exercises, not more routine military training. President Donald Trump surprised officials in Seoul and Washington when he pledged to end "war games" after his summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Singapore last week.

Immediately after the announcement, U.S. forces in Korea said they had received no guidance on stopping any drills and South Korean officials said they were trying to figure out which exercises Trump was referring to.

U.N. rights boss takes aim at U.S. migration policy in final speech

The top U.N. human rights official called on the United States on Monday to halt its "unconscionable" policy of forcibly separating children from migrant parents entering the country from Mexico.

There was no immediate reaction from the U.S. delegation in the room, led by Geneva-based diplomat Jason Mack. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security says that nearly 2,000 kids were separated between April and May.

Last month, Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced a "zero tolerance" policy on illegal immigration. Meaning every adult that illegally crosses the U.S.-Mexico border will be prosecuted and jailed.

U.S. to give North Korea post-summit timeline

The United States is expected to present a timeline to North Korea with specific requests of Pyongyang after a historic summit between U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, a senior U.S. defense official said.

Reuters report details were not specific but the timeline is suggested to be rapid enough to make clear Pyongyang's level of commitment.

"We'll know pretty soon if they're going to operate in good faith or not," an anonymous U.S. official said.

National security analysts have criticized Trump for his agreement with Kim at their June 12 summit that concluded with few details on how Pyongyang would surrender its nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles.

U.S. officials hope to achieve major disarmament by North Korea within the next 2-1/2 years.



Prison shares rise as U.S. eyes more migrant family detention space

Shares in private prison operators CoreCivic Inc and Geo Group rose on Friday as investors bet on increasing demand for their services after U.S. authorities asked about available capacity for the detention of immigrant families.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's office of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) issued a request for information on Friday afternoon about potential facilities from different providers to accommodate up to 15,000 beds, ideally in several locations.

The move came after U.S. President Donald Trump issued an executive order on Wednesday aimed at ending his controversial policy of separating immigrant children from their parents caught entering the country illegally. Under the order, which is likely to be challenged in court, families will now be detained together for the duration of their criminal and immigration proceedings. The latter can take months or even years to complete.

Shares in CoreCivic closed up 3.95 percent at \$23.39, a nearly five-month high, in an unusually active trading day on Friday. The stock has jumped 11.2 percent in the last four days.

Chinese media says U.S. has "delusions" as impact of trade war spreads



Markets continue to wobble as Beijing and Washington keep up with its war of words. Chinese media said, "U.S. protectionism is self-defeating and a symptom of paranoid delusions that must not distract China from its path to modernization."

President Donald Trump threatened on Monday to hit \$200 billion of Chinese imports with 10 percent tariffs if China retaliates against his previous targeting of \$50 billion in imports.

Investor fears of a full-blown trade war have weighed on markets, including Chinese shares, which posted their worst weekly loss since early February. China's commerce ministry accused the United States on Thursday of being "capricious" over trade issues and warned that the interests of U.S. workers and farmers would ultimately be hurt, vowing to hit back with "quantitative" and "qualitative" measures.

U.S. to restore sanctions on Iran

The Trump administration said it would restore sanctions on Iran that had been lifted under the 2015 nuclear accord at midnight on Monday, ratcheting up pressure on Tehran while worsening a divide with Europe.

The new sanctions are a consequence of President Trump's decision in May to withdraw from the nuclear deal with world powers. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Sunday that the goal was to get Iran to change its ways — including ending all nuclear enrichment and curbing its weapons programs, as well as ending its support of brutal governments or uprisings in the Middle East.



European officials have said that the Iran nuclear agreement is crucial to their national security. International inspectors have concluded that Iran is complying with the accord.

The new sanctions bar any transactions with Iran involving dollar bank notes, gold, precious metals, aluminum, steel, commercial passenger aircraft and coal, and they end imports into the United States of Iranian carpets and food stuffs.

An even tougher round of sanctions is scheduled to go into effect in November, including sanctions on Iran's sale of crude oil and transactions with its Central Bank.

Goldman Sachs names Jim Esposito co-head of trading division

On Monday, Goldman Sachs named Jim Esposito global co-head of the Wall Street bank's trading division. Esposito, who will continue to be based in London, will join Ashok Varadhan to lead the fixed income, currency and commodities (FICC) and equities businesses. Prior to the new role, he was co-chief operating officer of Goldman Sachs' FICC franchise.



China loses status as world's second-largest stock market amid trade war with U.S.

Chinese shares ceded their ranking as the second-largest market in the world to Japan. Chinese stocks were worth a total of \$6.09 trillion at the market close on Thursday. That compared to the \$6.16 trillion market value of the Japanese shares at the end of the Thursday trading session.

China's market surpassed Japan in market value in November 2014 to become the world's second-largest. The change in rankings came after the Asian markets declined in the previous session amid an elevation in trade tensions after the Trump administration said it was considering increasing proposed tariff on \$200 billion in Chinese goods to 25 percent compared to an initially announced 10 percent.

Market commentary video scripts

I wrote video scripts for our weekly market commentary [videos](#). These are geared toward farmers, and informs them about technical and fundamental factors affecting the market, which can help them make better selling decisions. Below are a handful of examples.

GOOD AFTERNOON, TODAY IS MONDAY, JULY 16TH, 2018.
CROP CONDITIONS LOOK GREAT, BUT GRAIN MARKETS CONTINUE TO STRUGGLE AS TALKS ABOUT TARIFFS CONTINUE TO STALL.
LAST THURSDAY, THE U-S-D-A RELEASED THE JULY WASDE REPORT.
THE USDA CUT OLD CROP CORN ENDING STOCKS BY 75 MILLION, TO 2.027 BILLION BUSHEL, WHICH WERE WELL BELOW THE AVERAGE TRADE GUESS.
NEW CROP CORN ENDING STOCKS WERE ALSO LOWERED BY 25 MILLION TO 1.552 BILLION BUSHEL.
THE OLD CROP BEAN NUMBERS WERE SUPPORTIVE AS THEY CUT ENDING STOCKS BY 40 MILLION TO 465 MILLION, WHILE NEW CROP INCREASED BY 195 MILLION TO 580 MILLION.
PLEASE CONTINUE TO KEEP AN EYE ON OUR NEW CROP BASIS VALUES TO FEED MILLS.
IF YOU HAVE A CERTAIN VALUE IN MIND FOR NEW CROP BUSHEL, NOW IS A GOOD TIME TO CONSIDER PUTTING IN A LIMIT ORDER ON THE LGS WEBSITE OR MOBILE APP.
THERE'S NO FEE FOR THOSE CONTRACTS.

GOOD AFTERNOON, TODAY IS FRIDAY, AUGUST 24, 2018.
CORN AND SOY COMPLEX FUTURES WERE LOWER THURSDAY ON FIELD REPORTS FROM SCOUTS ON THE PRO FARMER CROP TOUR REPORTING STRONG MIDWEST CORN AND SOYBEAN YIELDS.
THE ONGOING U.S.-CHINA TRADE DISPUTE CONTINUED TO PRESSURE FUTURES AS WELL.
LOW LEVEL TRADE TALKS WRAPPED UP WITH NO RESOLUTION, WHICH THE MARKET REACTED AS BAD NEWS.
THE LATEST ROUND OF EXPORT DATA FROM U-S-D-A WAS BULLISH FOR SOYBEANS, BUT TRADE AND WEATHER WILL CONTINUE TO CREATE SIGNIFICANT HEADWINDS UNLESS SOME CHANGES ARE MADE SOON.
THE OUTLOOK FOR BEANS IS BEARISH UNTIL CHINA STARTS BUYING AGAIN, BUT USDA'S FARMER AID PACKAGE COULD ALLEVIATE SOME OF THE PAIN.
THE USDA WILL ANNOUNCE DETAILS OF THE PACKAGE ON MONDAY.
EARLIER THIS WEEK, AGRI-PULSE REPORTED THAT THE PRELIMINARY AMOUNT FOR CASH PAYMENTS WOULD BE \$1.65 PER BUSHEL FOR SOYBEANS AND \$0.01 PER BUSHEL FOR CORN.
THIS WOULD EQUAL \$7.6 BILLION IN AID FOR SOYBEANS.

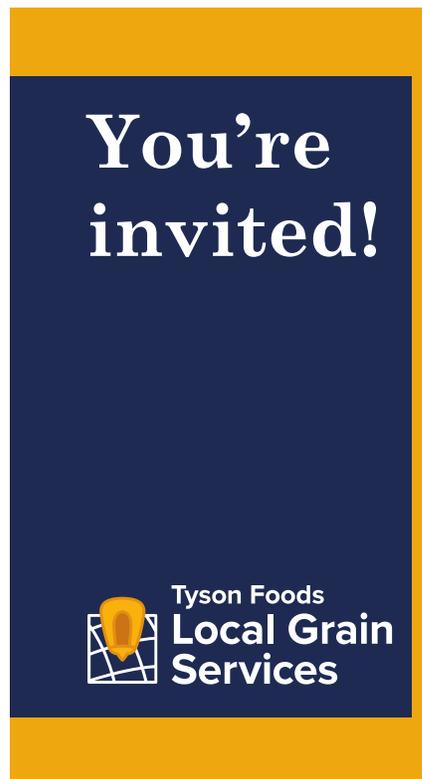
GOOD AFTERNOON, TODAY IS FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 21st, 2018.
CORN PRICES ARE TRYING TO PUSH A LITTLE HIGHER TODAY AFTER THE MARKET RALLIED YESTERDAY.
CORN TRADED UP AS MUCH AS 10 CENTS AND BEANS WERE UP AT 25 CENTS. WEEKLY EXPORTS SALES TOOK SOME OF THE CREDIT FOR YESTERDAY'S RALLY ALMOST DOUBLING THE TOTAL FROM THE PRIOR WEEK WITH 54.9 MILLION BUSHELLS SOLD.
OTHER RUMORED REASONS FOR THE RALLY POINT TO ARGENTINE EXPORT TAXES AND ITS IMPORTS OF U-S SOYBEANS ALONG WITH THE WET WEATHER WE SAW IN THE MIDWEST.
THESE ARE ALL JUST RUMORS BUT WE'RE LOOKING TO SEE IF THE MARKETS CAN STAY AND KEEP UP WITH THE RALLY TODAY.
FARMERS HAVE REPORTED TO *FARM FUTURES* SLIGHTLY BETTER YIELDS FOR CORN AND SOYBEANS.
HOWEVER, IT'S STILL BELOW THE BIG NUMBERS REPORTED BY THE USDA'S WASDE REPORT ON SEPTEMBER 12.
IN THE LATEST CROP PROGRESS REPORT, THE U-S-D-A REPORTED 68 PERCENT OF CORN AT GOOD TO EXCELLENT STAYING STAGNANT FROM LAST WEEK'S REPORT, AND INDICATED 54 PERCENT OF CORN MATURE, PUTTING US 18 POINTS AHEAD OF LAST YEAR.
THIS WEEK'S HARVEST PROGRESS IS UP FROM LAST YEAR AT 9 PERCENT. WE CAN CREDIT THIS TO DRIER WEATHER ACROSS THE CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN U-S.
HOWEVER, STORMS CONTINUE TO MOVE THROUGH THE COUNTRY BRINGING HEAVY RAINFALLS TO THE NORTHWEST CORN BELT THIS WEEK – STALLING HARVEST FOR FARMERS IN THOSE AREAS.

GOOD AFTERNOON, TODAY IS FRIDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2018.
THE MARKETS HAVE BEEN IN A RATHER QUIET TRADING PATTERN THIS WEEK WITH DECEMBER CORN TRADING BETWEEN \$3.64 AND \$3.68 THE PAST FOUR DAYS.
HARVEST IS OFF TO A STRONG START THIS YEAR WITH 26% OF THE CROP GATHERED VERSUS 17% ON AVERAGE.
HOWEVER, IT LOOKS LIKE IT WON'T BE EASY TO BRING IN THE REST OF THIS BUMPER CROP.
THE CORN BELT IS EXPECTING ANYWHERE FROM FIVE TO TEN INCHES OF RAINFALL IN THE NEXT 10 DAYS.
THIS IS A GOOD TIME TO CONSIDER LOCKING IN SOME HEDGE-TO-ARRIVE CONTRACTS FOR JANUARY/FEBRUARY/MARCH 2020 DELIVERY SINCE THE MARCH 2020 FUTURES ARE TRADING ABOVE \$4.05.
THE U-S-D-A WILL RELEASE THE OCTOBER W-A-S-D-E REPORT ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 11TH AT 11:00 CENTRAL TIME. SINCE WE CONTINUE TO HEAR OF GOOD RESULTS FROM THE FIELDS ON YIELDS, WE SUSPECT THE U-S-D-A WILL RAISE YIELDS IN NEXT WEEK'S REPORT.

GOOD AFTERNOON, TODAY IS MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2018.
WE ARE STARTING THE WEEK OFF WITH A QUIET MARKET BUT EXPECT TO SEE CHANGES LATER THIS WEEK WITH THE U-S-D-A REPORT AND DISASTROUS RAINFALL FROM HURRICANE FLORENCE.
ALL EYES ARE ON THE WASDE REPORT, WHICH IS SET TO BE RELEASED THIS WEDNESDAY.
THE MARKET IS EXPECTING THE U-S-D-A TO REPORT RECORD YIELDS IN BOTH CORN AND BEANS, WITH BEANS EXPECTED TO INCREASE FROM AUGUST ESTIMATES WHILE CORN IS EXPECTED TO DECLINE.
THE MARKET IS STILL STRUGGLING WITH THE SAME FACTORS FROM THE PAST FEW WEEKS, INCLUDING CHINA'S SWINE FLU AND ARGENTINA'S CURRENCY.
WHILE THE U-S AND CHINA TRADE WAR CONTINUES WITH NO SETTLEMENT TALKS, MARKETS HAVE PAUSED FOR THE TIME WHILE WAITING FOR WEDNESDAY'S CROP REPORT.
THE FORECAST FOR THIS WEEK LOOKS MOSTLY DRY ACROSS THE MIDWEST WITH SOME AREAS SEEING HEAVY RAINS IN THE DAYS BEFORE HURRICANE FLORENCE MAKES LANDFALL.
FLORENCE IS EXPECTED TO HIT THE CAROLINA'S AND REACHING VIRGINIA LATE THIS WEEK.
THE HURRICANE AND BIG RAINFALLS COULD DAMAGE SOME CROPS IN THE CAROLINA'S AND VIRGINIA.
WE SAW THE REMNANTS FROM TROPICAL STORM GORDON THIS WEEKEND, WHICH DOWNPOURED RAIN IN PARTS OF THE DELTA LAST WEEK REACHING ALABAMA, CENTRAL MISSISSIPPI AND SOUTHERN ARKANSAS.
THE STORM PRESSURED MANY FARMERS TO GET CROPS OUT OF THE FIELD AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
FOLLOW-UP WITH US LATER THIS WEEK AS THE U-S-D-A REPORT IS RELEASED.
IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE GIVE US A CALL ANYTIME.

Example of mailer invites for events

In addition to handling communications and social media, I also helped manage and plan events. This included finding and booking a venue, creating creative materials and itinerary, creating invites and capturing RSVPs, ordering food, and attending the events. Below is an example of one invitation.



Join us for dinner to meet the team and learn more about selling your corn, beans, and wheat to Tyson Foods Local Grain Services.

Wednesday, December 12
6 - 8 p.m.

Hickory Log Restaurant
1314 West Business Hwy. 60
Dexter, MO 63841

Please RSVP with your name and number attending by December 4 to localgrainservices@tyson.com or (479) 290-2122.

We hope to see you there!

Chapter Five: Research Analysis

Introduction and Purpose of Study

This research paper is for a professional project with Tyson Foods, Inc. subsidiary, Tyson Foods Local Grain Services (LGS). The international leader in the food industry relies heavily on corn to feed and produce its millions of chickens. The corporation developed a department, Tyson Foods LGS to strategically buy corn from farmers near and around their poultry farmers – cutting costs on transportation and costs of paying the middlemen. The challenge Tyson Foods LGS faces is efficiently reaching out to farmers about this new business. This is due to the lack of knowledge of the specific media channels corn farmers are utilizing to establish these business-to-business relationships, and how and why farmers are using them. Media channels, or the different platforms users utilize to get information, can be broken into two categories: Traditional media (TV, newspapers, magazines, radio, billboards, mail, and face-to-face) and new media (social media, websites, blogs, email, and mobile apps).

This research will explore the media channels farmers use to establish business relationships through four focus group discussions (FGDs) with six farmers each from Missouri and Arkansas. Little research has been done on this topic of farmers and their use of media channels. The few similar studies found were conducted quantitatively (Doerfert, Graber, Meyers, & Irlbeck, 2012; Shaw et al., 2015; Van Dalsem, 2011), which provided insight into patterns of farmer's media use but did not explore the underlying reasons why and how farmer's use media channels. Qualitative methods, such as focus group discussions, would benefit this phenomenon by unearthing insights. Understanding this phenomenon can help researchers better

understand this niche group and help professional communicators to ensure efficient communications strategies geared towards farmers.

Theory Framework

Diffusion of Innovation Theory

The theoretical framework for this study draws on two theories: Rogers' (2003) diffusion of innovations theory and uses and gratifications theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973). The diffusion of innovations theory explains how new ideas, practice, or products are spread among groups of people. Diffusion of innovations has been applied in many disciplines (Rogers, 2003) and cited in numerous studies, particularly the adoption of new online media. The theory has been used to understand why some users are leaving specific media platforms for others (Coursaris, Yun, & Sung, 2010) and to find specifically who is using certain technologies (Peng & Mu, 2011). The dissemination follows an order of adopters: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority and laggards (Rogers, 2003). Rogers (2003) stated that characteristics are different among people who adopt an innovation earlier than people who adopt an innovation later. The innovation's characteristics, from the adopter's perception, help explain the different rate of adoption. These include the economic or social advantage, how compatible it is with existing values, how complex the innovation is, trialability, and observability (Rogers, 2003).

Economic/Social Advantage identifies if the innovation is better than the idea it is taking over (Rogers, 2003, p. 212). The advantage is typically expressed in economic profitability, social status or other benefits. Griliches (1957), an economist, conducted a study on U.S. farmers and their adoption of hybrid corn. He believed that over the long haul, "sociological variables tend to cancel themselves out, leaving the economic variables as the major determinants of the pattern of technological change" (Rogers, 2003, p. 213).

Compatibility refers to how well an innovation meshes with an individual's existing values, past experiences, and the needs of potential adopters (Rogers, 2003, p.224). Rogers notes an innovation can be compatible or incompatible with sociocultural values and beliefs, with previously introduced ideas, or with needs for the innovation. How compatible an individual is with an idea they previously adopted can increase or decrease the adoption rate. "Old ideas are the main mental tools that individuals utilize to assess new ideas," Rogers noted (2003, p. 225). Compatibility can also come in the form of meeting an individual's felt need. Individuals may not realize they have a need for an innovation until they are made aware of the innovation or its consequences (Rogers, 2003). If these felt needs are fulfilled, the adoption rate typically increases.

Complexity refers to how difficult a new innovation is to understand and use. Rogers(2003) states that an innovation's complexity is negatively related to its adoption rate. In a study of the first adopters of home computers, researchers – Rogers, Daley, and Wu (1980) – found that early adopters experienced several weeks of extreme frustration in understanding how to use a home computer. Rogers(2003) stated the "perceived complexity of home computers was an important negative force on their adoption rate in the early 1980s" (p. 243). Home computers eventually became easier to use, and the adoption rate rose gradually to about 30 percent of all U.S. households by 1994 (Rogers 2003).

Trialability is the extent to which an innovation may be experimented with. New ideas that can be tried out are generally adopted more rapidly (Rogers, 2003). By having the opportunity to test out an innovation, individuals are able to give meaning to the innovation and discover how it works. Trialability can eliminate any doubts about a new idea. Rogers (2003) determined trialability of an innovation is positively related to its adoption rate. Researchers

(Gross, 1942; Ryan, 1948) stated that trialability is considered more important for earlier adopters than for later adopters

Observability refers to how visible an innovation is to others. Some ideas and its consequences are easily observed to others, such as new technology. Other innovations, however, are more difficult to describe or be visible to others. Rogers (2003) determined observability of an innovation is positively related to its adoption rate.

Rogers (2003) stated diffusion is the process by which an innovation is communicated to members of a social system through certain channels. Individual's make innovation decisions based on a five-step process (Rogers, 2003):

1. Knowledge – person becomes aware of an innovation and has some idea of how it functions.
2. Persuasion – person forms a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward the innovation.
3. Decision – person engages in activities that lead to a choice to adopt or reject the innovation.
4. Implementation – person puts an innovation into use.
5. Confirmation – person evaluates the results of an innovation-decision already made.

Rogers (2003) also notes the importance of understanding a target populations' characteristics when promoting an innovation because it could influence the adoption of the innovation. The communication channels used to spread an innovation may also help or hinder the innovation's adoption rate. Researchers (Petrini et al., 1968) found that different communication channels and the complexity of an innovation can influence the adoption rate for Swedish farmers. Media channels, such as agricultural magazines, were preferred for less complex innovations. However, Swedish farmers preferred interpersonal contact with company representatives or extension agents when the innovation was more complex. It is suggested that if an inappropriate media channel was used, the rate of adoption would be slower.

Uses and Gratifications

Uses and gratifications (U&G) theory is relevant to media channels because of its origination in communications literature (Whiting & Williams, 2013). Traditionally, communication researchers asked the question of what the media do to people. A U&G approach was first formally outlined by Katz (1959) when he instead asked what people do with the media. U&G theory addresses how people choose particular media to fulfill certain needs they expect to be met. The basic goals of this theory, as outlined by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch in 1974, are: "(a) to explain how people use media to gratify their needs, (b) to understand motives for media behavior, and (c) to identify functions or consequences that follow from needs, motives, and behavior" (Bryant & Zillmann, 1994, p. 527). The core assumption of U&G is that the audience is active, not passive, in choosing media to fulfill their needs and wants. Their selection and use of media is purposive and motivated to satisfy their social and psychological needs or desires (Katz, 1959).

Rosengren (1974) stated that to stimulate motives for media use, communication should intermingle with social and psychological factors. To meet a specific goal, people will select a certain type of media based upon its ability to help meet that goal (Katz et al., 1973). One defining portion of the theory suggests that U&G theory researchers recognize that the audience may select more than one type of media and some media choices may be older, more traditional types of media, such as TV, radio or newspaper, that satisfy needs in unchanged ways (Katz et al., 1973). The theory also emphasizes that motives, attitudes, and behaviors of media consumption varies by individual or group (Papacharissi, 2009), such as farmers. U&G studies typically look at a specific medium or compare U&G across media. It has historically addressed choices in traditional media such as print, radio, and television. However, current studies are

exploring the major trends in U&G and extending the framework to newer media and genres (Papacharissi, 2009).

Classification. Palmgreen (1984) summarized uses and gratifications research into an overarching umbrella of six main areas that specifically relate to the scope of U&G research: (1) gratifications and media consumption; (2) social and psychological origins of gratifications; (3) gratifications and media effects; (4) gratifications sought and obtained; (5) expectancy-value approaches to uses and gratifications; and (6) audience activity. Some researchers base their studies and focus on one of the areas he identified. Within each of these areas, several classifications of mass media uses have been suggested. When entertainment was added as a media use, Wright (1959) recommended a category which would assume importance in other classifications, such as play and pleasure (Stephenson, 1967). Conversely, McQuail (1972) suggested that the most common motivation of media users was escaping reality. In addition, other researchers proposed that media needs may be “cognitive, affective, or both, and oriented towards an individual’s sense of self or the social environment” (Gurevitch, Katz, & Haas, 1973). Of the classifications addressed, researchers grouped media use into five main categories, (Katz et al., 1973): (1) be informed or educated (cognitive needs), (2) strengthening aesthetic, pleasurable, and emotional experience (affective needs), (3) social interaction with family, friends, and the world (integrative needs), (4) escape from reality, and (5) to increase credibility, confidence, and status.

Criticism. Uses and gratifications research has long been challenged for various reasons. The assumption that the audience is active and in control, is argued by researchers (Lometti, Reeves, & Bybee, 1977) that “uses and gratifications are mediators of, rather than substitutes for, media effects” (p. 325). Others (Barratt, 1990) question the view that there are no “hidden

messages” in media content. Researchers have also expressed the concerns about the limited scope of U&G. Palmgreen, Wenner, and Rayburn (1981) argue that there is still a lot to learn about gratifications and how they relate to media behavior. More fundamentally, some mass communication scholars have contended that uses and gratifications are not a rigorous social science theory and criticized it for being vague and atheoretical. It has been accused by many scholars including Swanson (1977) of simply restating some aspects of theories, and offering little more than an approach to collect data or a research strategy. However, several U&G researchers beg to differ (Blumler, 1979; Palmgreen, 1984; Papacharissi, 2009; Ruggiero, 2000). Ruggiero (2000) also talks about the debate if U&G is a “legitimate” theory. He argues that with newer media emerging, U&G is a rigorous theory and will be applied to understand tnew media because it brings a wider range of media channels for audience to choose from (Ruggiero, 2000). With the core criticism that U&G is non-theoretical, Palmgreen (1984) argues that it would be difficult to defend such a statement today because growth of theory of U&G has increased. Researchers stated that U&G is now shifting to theory development focusing on understanding and explaining how an audience’s motives, motives, expectations, and behaviors are interconnected (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974).

Recent studies have explored major trends in U&G and applied the framework to studies about new media and different genres (Papacharissi, 2009). Whiting and Williams (2013) explored the U&G that consumers receive from using social media. They found ten U&G relevant to social media including interaction, information seeking and entertainment (Whiting & Williams, 2013). The researchers cited that previous studies have provided that gratifications are “good predictors” of what media consumers use and will use again. U&G can be essential when developing “better scales and measurement instruments” for social media marketers (Whiting &

Williams, 2013, p. 362). This statement is important to bear in mind when looking at U&G from an advertising and marketing perspective.

Literature Review

While many DOI and U&G studies have been conducted to explore various media and genres, few have looked at farmers and their media use. Recent research reported that farmers use both traditional and non-traditional sources of media to get news and information about new products and services (National Association of Farm Broadcasters, 2010; Readex Research, 2016; Woodruff, 2016). These studies show that using the internet for information and news-seeking purposes has increased over time. However, in these studies, the internet was not the primary or secondary selected communication channel for farmers. In the American Business Media Agri Council's 2016 media channel study (Readex Research, 2016) findings indicated that digital and mobile use was growing rapidly. However, print media channels (newspapers and magazines) still remained the most salient way farmers were learning about new products, services, and information.

One study explored the use of traditional and social media farmers in Texas (Doerfert et al., 2012). This study had several objectives including exploring what media channels were used to make production or business decisions and access information. The researchers found that farmers were multiple channel consumers who were utilizing traditional media and were just starting to use new media for personal reasons. Agricultural magazines were used as the primary channel for information seeking and decision making, and social media was not used in any form to assist in decision making or finding new products or services. Farmers indicated magazines were most frequently used to help make business decisions and access information. After magazines, the most used media channels were interpersonal or peers, newspapers and extension

agents with internet sites coming in last. The most consistently underused media channels included radio, blogs, Facebook and Twitter.

Shaw et al. (2015) took this research one step further to determine what stage of adoption farmers are in with new media channels. The researchers state that U&G can explain why people leave traditional media for new emerging online media, specifically, Facebook, Google+, Twitter, YouTube, and websites. These were selected by the researchers to examine based on popularity of use. People tend to choose new media because it is filling the same social and psychological needs as traditional media did. The following research questions were constructed to achieve the study's purpose of determining farmer's use of online communication tools: (1) "What is the extent of the respondents' personal use of online communication tools? (2) What is the extent of respondents' business use of online communication tools? (3) What relationship exists between online communication tool use for personal and business purposes?" (Shaw et al., 2015, p. 4). Researchers found that websites – no specific websites – and Facebook were regularly used among the participants for personal and business use. About one third of the respondents indicated that websites were the sole and only tool they used every day for business purposes. The researchers were grasping for a reason why farmers weren't using more online communication tools or new media for business purposes. Justification for this can be found with the diffusion of innovations theory in that "adoption is a function of time and influenced by innovation attributes such as trialability, observability, and compatibility (Rogers, 2003)" (Shaw et al., 2015, p. 13). This indicates that farmers may still be in the initial adoption stages for new media. What is not known from this study is if new media channels are in the early stages of adoption or have already been rejected.

Another study explores the contexts surrounding the information seeking of Australian

grain and cotton growers (Starasts, 2015). The researcher examined what guides farmer's information seeking for business purposes and what they considered to be information. The findings suggest that farmers used online databases and systems that provided them with information from farmers in specific locations – typically those who lived near them. Farmers also sought answers or information from other farmers who had similar problems as them. To help other farmers out, farmers would share their own experiences.

These prior studies provide insights into farmers and their media uses, but the gap provides a need for qualitative research. The DOI theory and U&G theory will help provide a framework for understanding the experiences of farmers and their media uses, and help answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What media channels are corn farmers utilizing to establish their business relationships?

RQ2: How are farmers using these media channels?

RQ3: Why are farmers using specific media channels over others to establish business relationships?

Methodology

Case study

A single case study approach using four focus group discussions (FGDs) comparing two different types of participant groups were utilized to explore the research questions, and uncover patterns and linkages to theory (Daymon & Holloway, 2002). A case study is usually associated with a location, but the case may be an organization, an event, or – in this case – a set of people, corn farmers. Case studies aim to increase knowledge about real, contemporary communication events in their context. Daymon and Holloway (2002) stated that questions about how and why

things occur in a particular situation, or “what is going on here?” are your primary concern when you opt for a case study approach. The subject of the case study is the “practical, historical unity” through which the theoretical focus of the study is being viewed (Daymon & Holloway, 2002). The object is the theoretical focus – the analytical frame. In this current study, the object is farmers and their media uses for business reasons, and the subject is Tyson Foods Local Grain Services’ corn farmers. This case was selected primarily for practical reasons as I was working there at the time of this study, and the findings would also help prioritize marketing strategies for Tyson LGS. In addition, the case is an understudied phenomenon, which lends itself as a logical choice for selection (Stake, 1995). The case was also selected for the “everyday goings on” (Daymon & Holloway, 2000, p. 110). Daymon and Holloway (2000) stated that analyzing “how and what things become ordinary or generally acceptable can make a significant contribution” (p. 110).

Focus Group Discussions

Four FGDs were conducted to elicit the responses needed to answer the research questions. There was an important need for four FGDs because qualitative studies require in-depth data and the only way to do this is to conduct more than one FGD. This method is the most appropriate because the objectives of analyses are to explore corn farmers’ current behaviors and feelings about media uses in relationship with businesses. Each FGD was conducted at 90-120 minutes with minigroups, which consisted of a homogeneous group of six participants. Greenbaum (1993) states that some researchers like to use minigroups rather than full groups, which consists of 8-10 participants, because “they feel they can gain more in-depth information from smaller groups” (Greenbaum, 1993, p.3). With a smaller group, participants had more time each for input. Although FGDs elicit in-depth data, they are lacking in a few areas. Some

participants were hesitant to express their honest thoughts, but strategic moderations helped allow each member to speak their thoughts.

Demographic Criteria and Sampling

Participants were purposively recruited from farmers who have and continue to sell their grain to Tyson Foods LGS. Access to their contact information was simple because every farmer had a profile with their contact information listed on the company server. These profiles showed that farmers who make the business decisions and sell the grain are male Caucasians ranging from ages 25 to 80. Age was not a criterion in this study as having a good range of ages in each FGD will produce a true cross sample of experiences.

In order to answer the research questions and apply the theories to better understand this niche group and their media uses, FGDs were conducted with groups of active corn farmers and groups of less active corn farmers. Active corn farmers are consistently selling their grain to the company and interacting with the company regularly, whereas less active farmers had not sold or interacted with the company within the last six months. This comparative study will allow the researcher to look at why some farmers aren't as receptive as others. The first two FGDs in Missouri and Arkansas consisted of six active farmers each. The last FGDs in Missouri consisted of six less active farmers each. The FGD locations were chosen for convenience reasons. Emails were sent out to the selected focus group participants with a deadline to accept or decline by. Phone calls followed the emails to assure the farmers knew what and why they were asked to participate. In total, 24 farmers were asked to participate but only 20 participated. Two farmers from one of the less active groups were no-shows. They had confirmed their participation but did not show up to the FGDs, so there was no time to contact the back-up potential participants. Participants' identities have been kept confidential. Because the FGDs were conducted face-to-

face, it is automatically labeled as confidential and I would be able to identify who provided the data (Statistics Solutions, 2009). The data was analyzed at the group level. Each participant was also incentivized with \$25 gift cards funded by the Division of Applied Social Sciences through the University of Missouri College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources.

Data Collection

The four FGDs were conducted between June – August 2018. The discussions were structured around an interview guide, a list of open-ended questions. A set of predetermined semi-structured and theory-based questions were constructed ahead of time (See in Appendix A). A pilot study of the FGD was conducted in early June, which led to minor restructurings of a few questions in the discussion guide. Time and room were also made to serve any questions that arose during the discussion. According to Harrell (2009), semi-structured interviews collect detailed information in a style that is conversational for participants. This type of interview is typically used when a researcher's goal is to delve deep into a topic and understand the answers the participants provide (Harrell, 2009). The aim of the FGD was to foster a free-flowing discussion. The participants' own comments stimulated and influenced the sharing of others in the group. Creative techniques were also implemented to elicit the responses needed. These included having farmer's draw their decision-making process and the media channels involved. The FGDs were video-taped and transcribed. Demographic questions were asked to break the ice and initiate the conversation, followed by questions, such as "Where do you get new information about agricultural businesses?" or "Write down what a typical day looks like, including any time you have interactions with media channels."

Open coding was used for the initial analysis. All transcripts were read vertically, then horizontally (Dey, 1993). After listing the different types of media channels used and pulling low

inference descriptors, or direct quotes, from participants related to the channels, pattern coding was utilized (Saldaña, 2013). I then used the five-step decision process within the diffusion of innovations theory to help categorize what media channels were used during which step of the decision-making process, which made analyzing much simpler and more organized. I took on the epistemological orientation of social constructivism, which guided the analysis process. Social constructivism argues that reality and the meaning or categories that frame everyday life are created socially. This perspective, in terms of FGD analyses, emphasizes that group members collaborate on “some issue, how they achieve consensus (or fail to), and how they construct shared meanings about products, communications, or social concerns” (Stewart, Shamdasani, & Rock, 2007).

Findings

All participants were Caucasian males and ranged between the ages of 30 – 67. The ages of the less active participants were 44, 47, 49, 50, 54, 59, 62, 67, 67 and 69. The active participants were 30, 30, 32, 37, 38, 42, 43, 53, 58 and 66 years old. The amount of time these farmers have been farming ranged drastically between 3 – 50 years, with the majority of the younger farmers having fewer years of experience.

Table 1 shows a summary of the media channels farmers use and indicates how they are used. Active participants indicated they used more new media channels than traditional, and less active participants used more traditional media channels than new media channels. Researchers (Katz et al., 1973) recognized that people may select more than one type of media, with some choices being more traditional types of media that satisfy their needs in unchanged ways.

While farmers are using multiple media channels, they are also using them for different reasons to fulfill different needs. Table 1 shows what media channels were used during which

steps of decision-making process. The findings point that farmers are using media channels during step 1 of knowledge, and step 3 of making a decision. Orr (2003) states that the knowledge step is when an individual becomes aware of an innovation and has some idea of how it functions. The decision step is when the individual engages in activities that lead to a choice to adopt or reject the innovation.

Table 1 Summary of how farmers use media channels

Media channel types	Less active and/or active	DOI: Five-step decision process (Orr, 2003)	How farmers used the media channel
Interpersonal: Word of mouth from neighbor or friends	Less active and active	Step 1: Knowledge	Passively happens during casual conversations or need recognition leads to this
	Less active and active	Step 3: Decision	Actively seeking peer's reviews and own experiences
Google search	Active	Step 1: Knowledge	Need recognition leads to online search
	Less active and active	Step 3: Decision	Search for more information about the company through company website or published articles
Facebook	Less active and active	Step 3: Decision	Search for reviews from peers or mentions about the innovation, and examine the company's page
Twitter	Active	Step 1: Knowledge	Search for new innovation from farmers across the country
YouTube	Less active and active	Step 1: Knowledge	Actively seeking new innovations
Radio	Less active	Step 1: Knowledge	Passively happens as radio is constantly on
TV	Less active and active	Step 1: Knowledge	Passively happens

Magazine	Less active and active	Step 1: Knowledge	Actively seeking ads and articles about new innovations

Word-of-mouth

Word-of-mouth is both actively sought after a need is recognized and passively learned through casual conversations with peers. Both active and less active participants use word-of-mouth to help make decisions through their peers’ reviews. Below I list a few examples of how participants have used word-of-mouth from peers to become aware of a new innovation and to make a decision about the innovation. The letter “A” indicates the quote came from an active participant and “LA” indicates it came from a less active participant.

“They've experienced it themselves and they've also done the research and I've never done research. Why do I have to bother doing it? I trust them.” (LA)

“We often have a neighbor, he says, ‘Try this. I've tried it out for so long it works for me and saves me money or makes me money.’ I appreciate when he does that because it’s the best and it's saved me a lot of time from having to search for things and do a lot of digging.” (LA)

“If somebody else actually used it first and are talking to people and tell us about their experiences, we'll listen but will also look it up and get our own opinion.” (A)

Overall, participants in this study identified word-of-mouth as an important way to become aware of new innovations, be persuaded about the innovation, and helps them decide to adopt or reject the innovation. Non-active participants rely heavily on their peers’ reviews and recommendations. The FGD setting allowed me to witness this happen during the discussions. One participant talked about a Facebook group he was a member of and a YouTube channel he watched to learn about new agricultural practices. Every participant immediately jotted down

notes and followed-up with questions such as, “What kind of things have you learned?” and “How do you spell that?”

Google

Active participants used Google to find a solution when they recognize a need. Google search is also used by both LA and A participants to seek more information about the innovation, company behind it or any articles published about it.

“Speed is key. If you want to know something, you can Google it pretty quickly.”
(A)

“If I want to know about something, then I'll go Google it then find the company website.” (A) *“But nobody puts anything on their website or online about how crappy they are or their product is. Still trial and error and visiting with other people and that sort of thing.”* (LA)

Facebook

Facebook is used by both groups for two separate reasons: (1) Search peers’ reviews and experiences with the innovation, and (2) examine the company’s Facebook page to see how it interacts with customers.

“In terms of businesses, you can get a pretty quick feel about a company through their social media page because the people that are gonna comment generally are the ones that they've upset. So I mean you can very quickly see some very upset people and read what they have to say and kind of put it in perspective and how the company dealt with them.” (LA)

“With Facebook, other users and farmers are writing their own reviews and I trust them more than the own company’s words.” (A)

“Social media is fast and quicker than traditional.” (A)

However, some less active participants indicated they did not use Facebook and commented on why they prefer not to use it:

“There’s a lot of wasted and unnecessary things on Facebook that I don’t have time for.” (LA)

“I’ve watched the amount of time it takes others to learn and use it [Facebook], and it doesn’t interest me at all.” (LA)

Twitter

Twitter is used only by active participants to learn about new innovations.

“I use twitter probably more or less just to see what everybody else from other parts of the country are doing in the field. So I just like seeing what everybody else is doing and see if I might want to try or use it too.” (A)

YouTube

YouTube is used by both groups to search and learn about new innovations.

“YouTube is just nice because people normally do these video reviews of products or show how they use new practices and ideas on their farms. We get to see it right in front of our eyes and it makes understanding it easier and makes it more simple to take what I learn and put it to use on my own farm.” (A)

“You can watch anything anywhere with YouTube. If I need to search how to fix this or how to use something new on my farm, I just YouTube it and sometimes I’ll find a video about it.” (LA)

Radio and TV

LA participants indicated usage of both radio and TV. They stated both media channels are always turned on and they end up hearing advertisements through these channels. Active participants said they usually turn the TV on but don’t fully pay attention to it.

“Radio is right with you. Everywhere you go. Your tractor and trucks pick up everything. So I have the radio on all the time.” (LA)

“I normally just turn the TV to an Ag show like RFD-TV in case they say something that’s important I need to hear, but I don’t really pay attention.”

There's a lot said on TV that I don't really care for or doesn't benefit me, and I don't have a lot of time to just sit around and watch TV to learn things.” (A)

Magazines

Less active participants indicated they used magazines heavily to learn about new practices and innovations.

“I like reading the articles. I always end up learning a lot and have put what I learned to use.” (LA)

Active participants, on the other hand, mentioned that they don't typically read the articles in a magazine.

“If I do look in a magazine, you know, they usually list their website in there. I hardly ever read anything in a magazine. I usually just search, look at it and if I like something posted in there and think it will help me in some way, I'll go to the website and learn more.” (A)

“I hate reading magazines because I wind up reading articles and following their advice and it's usually wrong. So now I have to go online on Facebook on Google, and see what other people are saying about it.” (A)

Discussion

RQ1: What media channels are farmers using?

Participants, both less active and active, exhibited multi-channel usage – similar to what Doerfert et al. (2012) found. This mirrors earlier findings that farmers utilized a multitude of various media channels to get information about the agriculture industry (Readex Research, 2016; National Association of Farm Broadcasters, 2010). Katz, Blumer, et al. (1973) recognized that an audience may select more than one type of media channel to fulfill their needs and the results of this study confirm that previous finding. Participants in this current study used a

combination of new and traditional media. LA participants used word-of-mouth (WOM), Google search, Facebook, YouTube, radio, TV, and magazine. Active participants used WOM, Google search, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, TV and magazine. Both groups used nearly the same types of media channels. Their activity with the company does not make a big difference in the types of media channels used. The only differences were that LA participants used radio and A participants did not, and A participants used Twitter and LA participants did not.

RQ2: How are farmers using these media channels? and RQ3: Why are farmers using certain media channels over others?

Based on the findings, farmers are using the selected media channels for two reasons: 1) Become aware or gain more knowledge about an innovation and 2) make a decision to adopt or reject the innovation. The active and less active groups use slightly different media channels to gain more knowledge about new innovations:

Active
WOM
Google
Twitter
YouTube
TV
Magazine

Less Active
WOM
YouTube
Radio
TV
Magazine

Participants in both groups are clearly using the above media channels to fulfill cognitive needs – becoming informed or educated about an innovation (Katz et al., 1973). While they use different channels to become informed, participants in this study are only using the same three media channels to make decisions: WOM, Google and Facebook. The following discussion will help us understand how and why they are using these media channels.

First, magazine, while used quite often by all participants to gain knowledge, is used differently by less active and active participants. Less active participants read the articles and will either implement what they learned or use it as a topic to discuss with peers. Active participants, on the other hand, do not enjoy reading the articles as much.

“I hate reading magazines because I wind up reading articles and following their advice and it’s usually wrong. So now I have to go online on Facebook on Google, and see what other people are saying about it.”

This individual’s perceived compatibility (Rogers, 2003) of magazines and his past experience with what was learned in the magazines led him to fact-check or review what others are saying. Incompatibility did not lead him to reject the innovation as he was already using it. It just added another layer to the decision-making process. Rogers (2003) stated that even if mis-adoption of an innovation occurs, individuals will continue to use it and fix it if they still have needs that need to be fulfilled.

Second, YouTube was used by all participants to find out more about an innovation. It can be assumed from the findings that these individuals enjoy seeing examples and visuals to learn from, and they are using YouTube to replace TV. Individuals noted that seeing how something works “makes understanding it easier and makes it more simple to take what I learn and put it to use on my own farm.” Participants

also noted that while they do watch agricultural TV shows to learn more about the agricultural industry or relevant news, they do not fully pay attention. One participant said he turns the TV on just in case there is something important he needs to hear but “there’s a lot said on TV that I don’t really care for or doesn’t benefit me, and I don’t have a lot of time to just sit around and watch TV to learn things.” Whereas YouTube allows them to control what they want to see or learn. The uses and gratifications theory states that people leave traditional media for new emerging online media channels because they fill the same social and psychological needs as traditional media did. In this case, participants also have an economic advantage because YouTube is free compared to TV. However, Griliches (1957) conducted a study where he found that in the long-run, sociological variables will diminish and economic variables will be the main reason whether an individual adopts or rejects a new technology. YouTube is currently a free and accessible tool for all. If a fee is ever implemented in order to watch videos, that may deter participants in this study from using it.

Third, WOM is crucial for both groups. WOM relies on consumers talking to one another in a direct way, is more effective than traditional marketing such as TV, radio or magazine. Researchers (Trusov, Bucklin, & Pauwels, 2009) conducted a study examining WOM and its effects. They found that WOM referrals have much longer marketing effects than traditional advertising. The researchers suggest WOM is a more attractive way to disseminate information because “they combine the prospect of overcoming consumer resistance with significantly lower costs and fast delivery—especially through technology, such as the Internet” (Trusov, Bucklin, & Pauwels, 2009, p. 90), which leads us to understand how and why farmers are using Facebook.

Fourth, Facebook and Google are interestingly used by most participants in both groups as a way to make a decision on an innovation. Customer reviews on a company's Facebook page or on Google can make the final decision for these individuals. In addition, how prompt the company is to interact or respond to a customer, and how they talk or comment back to the customer are major factors in whether or not individuals in this study adopt or reject an innovation. Participants in this study noted that "you can get a pretty quick feel about a company through their social media page." In addition, Facebook and Google reviews are merely a form of written WOM. Individuals in this study said they trust other Facebook users and farmers who write reviews more than they trust what the company says. Some of the active participants said at times they enjoyed going online for reviews instead of asking neighbors and friends because it is "faster and quicker than traditional ways."

Lastly, age and how active the participant is with the company may or may not influence why certain media channels are used over others. The comparative research design helps us understand if and why some individuals are more receptive to certain media channels.

Active. The majority of participants in the active group were younger, but there were a few older people at 52, 58 and 66 years old. The findings showed that those in the active group used more new and social media methods. However, those few older participants in this active group make an interesting case. Two of these participants, while older, can be labeled as innovators or early adopters. These two exhibited signs of innovators and early adopters, and exuded influence during the FGDs. They each also led most of the conversations and recommended new ways to find information for the other

participants in the FGDs. Through the uses and gratifications theory, it is possible they do this to increase credibility, confidence and/or status. Below are comments each one of them made during their FGDs:

“I’ve been part of a lot of those first groups who get to try out new things before they come out. And it teaches me a lot about changes in this industry.”

“Some of the older folks are stuck in their own ways but we need to learn that these things, these technologies can actually help us more.”

Both quotes indicate the participants may be innovators or early adopters. Rogers (2003) stated that for innovators or earlier adopters, trialability is more important than it is for later adopters. These individuals generally adopt new technologies or ideas because they are new (Investopedia, 2018). Early adopters create opinions about innovations and are then generally disseminated to their peers. These individuals also tend to take more risks and are able to see the innovation’s potential more than their peers. They are also the type of individuals businesses should target first when looking at marketing strategies (Gabugli, 2014).

The third deviant participant in this group used new media channels regularly, despite his age. He did not exude behaviors of an innovator or early adopter. Rather, he is comfortable using new media channels because his son works with him on the farm and has successfully introduced him to new media channels. This supports Rogers’ (2003) idea that if a tool has been tested and approved by friends, family, and peers, people are more likely to use it. It can also be assumed that positivity from observability, trialability and compatibility were factors in this case. Both observability and trialability are positively related to an innovations adoption rate (Rogers, 2003).

Less active. The majority of participants in the less active group were older but a few younger individuals fell in this group at 44, 47 and 49 years old. While more traditional media channels were utilized in this group, a couple new media channels were used as well, including YouTube and Facebook.

“You can watch anything anywhere with YouTube. If I need to search how to fix this or how to use something new on my farm, I just YouTube it and sometimes I’ll find a video about it.”

As stated earlier, YouTube may be fulfilling the same social and psychological needs as TV, a traditional media. The uses and gratifications theory states that people leave traditional media for new emerging online media channels because of this. Participants in this group may be changing their usage patterns because they have identified YouTube as being better in some way than TV.

For many of the less active participants, Facebook was an important media channel used to help make innovation decisions. While the group may be using more traditional than new media channels, uses and gratifications theory can help explain why Facebook is highly adopted and used among this group. Doerfert et al. (2012) found that farmers were using Facebook at a higher rate for personal reasons, such as communicating and socializing with family and friends as it has a reputation for being a socializing tool. Participants in this study may be using Facebook to help make innovation decisions because it is a popular media channel used among their peers. Observability (Rogers, 2003) explains that if media channel is positively and widely used among an individual’s friends and family, they are more likely to adopt the media channel or tool.

Interestingly enough, the younger, less active participants did not indicate they used Facebook for any personal or business reasons. All three made many comments about no interest in using it moving forward. Their reasons varied from complexity to incompatibility and not fulfilling any needs.

“I’ve watched the amount of time it takes others to learn and use it [Facebook], and it doesn’t interest me at all.”

This particular younger, less active participant seems to have rejected Facebook. It can be assumed from the quote that observability and complexity played a large role. This individual indicated that he observed his peers’ difficulty in using Facebook and the consequences led him to assume this innovation was too complex, and, therefore, rejected it. Rogers (2003) notes that observability is positively related to adoption rate. However, in this case where complexity of the innovation was visible, observability became a negative factor in adoption.

“There’s a lot of wasted and unnecessary things on Facebook that I don’t need or have time for.”

In addition, Facebook did not fill a psychological need for this individual. Instead, they may be fulfilling their needs through other media channels. Diffusion of innovations also help explain the incompatibility characteristic of Facebook for this individual. For an innovation to be compatible, it must mesh well with the person’s existing values and needs (Rogers, 2003). Incompatibility hinders the likelihood of adoption.

Conclusion and Limitations of the Study

The aim of this study was to explore the different types of media channels corn farmers used when establishing business relationships, understand how they used the media channels, and why they were using certain media channels over others. This case study looked at farmers who were active and less active with Tyson Foods Local Grain Services. The comparative study allowed an examination of whether inactivity influences media usage and why some farmers are more receptive to certain media channels. The analysis strongly suggested that farmers are still multi-channel users (Doerfert et al., 2012), and while this is an interesting finding in the study, the most salient findings are how farmers are using media channels for specific reasons and why certain channels are used over others. In addition, how active an individual is with a company was evidently not important in determining media channel usage. Age, however, was an interesting analysis as there were some cases where the younger participants did not adopt new media channels and vice versa – the older participants adopted new media channels.

Past research (National Association of Farm Broadcasters, 2010; Readex Research, 2016; Woodruff, 2016) show that the internet was not the primary or secondary media channel farmers used to learn about new innovations. In addition, Doerfert et al. (2012) found that print media channels, such as newspapers and magazines, were the most popular ways farmers learned about new innovations. In this current study, farmers indicated magazines as one of the ways they get information, but more and more are turning to different media channels (Google, Twitter and YouTube) to learn about products or services. One of the most salient ways farmers were learning about innovations was through word-of-mouth (WOM) –directly talking to other farmers face-

to-face. WOM is a crucial and often overlooked way of marketing to potential customers. Researchers (Trusov, Bucklin, & Pauwels, 2009) have found that WOM referrals “have substantially longer carryover effects than traditional marketing” (p.90) strategies. It is also financially more beneficial for companies to focus on WOM marketing as it could save more money.

In addition, the findings may suggest that farmers have already either adopted or rejected some new social media channels, including Facebook. A few younger participants have rejected Facebook due to incompatibility and how complex Facebook was observed to be, and, coincidentally, a few older participants adopted Facebook due to successful trialability, observability, and compatibility. A couple of the latter participants are also early adopters and innovators – venturesome in their risks, and also leading and shaping opinions about innovations. Previous researchers (Doerfert et al., 2012) found that farmers were utilizing traditional media and were just starting to use new media. In the aforementioned study, the most consistently underused media channels to find more information about innovations included blogs, Facebook and Twitter. Shaw et al. (2015) later found that many farmers were still not using social media in any way for business purposes, with only a small amount using Facebook. The researchers believed many of the social media channels were still in the initial stages of adoption. Three years after the latter research, this current study finds that farmers are using social media channels, such as YouTube and Facebook, to seek information and make business decisions. Following Rogers’ (2003) curve of diffusion, these social media channels have surpassed the adoption stages and are largely accepted by most of the farmers in this study, except the deviant cases.

The findings and analysis are of particular significance because of the very few research studies conducted about this niche group and their media uses. The findings in this study can help professional communicators better understand farmers and their media behaviors, and better help strategize marketing plans. The findings may also indicate which media channels communicators should focus more time, money and tactics on.

It is also important to understand the limitations of this research. This qualitative, single-case study examined and collected data from one business organization during a three month period with four FGDs consisting of 20 corn farmers. Although the methodology and research design were robust, future studies should undertake analysis based on more FGDs and from a variety of farmers to gain more insights and understandings of media channel usage behaviors. The many findings in this study offer opportunities for more in-depth understandings about word-of-mouth marketing to farmers, YouTube usage, how magazine usage among farmers have changed, and more. The study is also limited because of its qualitative nature as it cannot be generalized. Future research could take the findings from this qualitative study to develop a quantitative survey questionnaire and generalize to the population of corn farmers.

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Appendix

Original Project Proposal

University of Missouri School of Journalism
Professional Project Proposal
Hli Yang
Master's Candidate

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	3
Professional Skills Component.....	6
Research Analysis Component	7
Publication Possibilities.....	15
References.....	16

INTRODUCTION

This proposal is for a professional project with Tyson Foods, Inc. subsidiary, Tyson Local Grain Services (LGS). The project will allow me to conduct research and help create a strategic communications plan for LGS. There are many factors that have led me to this project and prepared for it including my undergraduate journalism courses, internships, and graduate courses. Before entering the Journalism Master's Program, I spent four years with the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources (CAFNR) and the Missouri School of Journalism doing my undergraduate degree in Science and Agricultural Journalism with an emphasis in Broadcast Journalism. This unique experience has led to me many valuable internships, gained skills, taught me valuable lessons, and led me to my new professional direction.

Journalism coursework and internship experiences

My journalism and broadcast courses laid the foundations and concepts of producing great journalism. Every broadcast course I took – B1, B2, B3, and Advanced Reporting – have taught me how to work under pressure but still produce quality work, write a story in many different forms including for the web and TV, be independent but still be part of a team, conduct thorough secondary research, and ultimately allowed me to serve the public. Courses in CAFNR were imperative in understanding the business and economics of agriculture, which will be useful when I begin my professional project. Additionally, my internships with Farm Journal Media, KOMU-TV, MU Extension, and RFD-TV gave me the opportunities to sharpen my writing skills and gain a better understanding of where journalism and communications fit in the economy.

My career and professional path has given me diverse experiences and the skills required to achieve my goals. For four years, I focused on honing my skills as a reporter but changed paths a few months before I graduated. The broadcast business model was changing, and the work hours and structure of job hopping was not ideal. I still held on to the concepts and groundwork of journalism – serving the public with integrity, storytelling, and research. I made the switch and applied to graduate school to gain a better understanding of strategic communications. Beforehand, I took a summer internship with Tyson Local Grain Services (LGS) in corporate communications researching and helping Tyson LGS with a short-term communications plan, create content, and buy media spots. More importantly, this internship allowed me to understand the business of commodity purchasing and who its consumers are, which will be vital in successfully completing this professional project.

Graduate coursework and experience

Contributing to the reason why I am prepared to take on my professional project is my graduate assistantship with MU Health Care working in public relations and communications. This opportunity gave me a better understanding of how PR, communications, and marketing collaborate in a corporate environment. In this position, I had the opportunity to own and execute a strategic press release and collaborate with the video team. The strategy behind the press release was to pressure state legislators to allocate more money to a program that would benefit rural medicine in Missouri. Being able to own this story and see its result was incredibly rewarding. Additionally, I worked with internal communications and gained a better understanding of how important it is to

cultivate a healthy and engaging work environment for employees. I also produced a monthly media placement video report for the leadership team – MU Health Care executive team and University of Missouri System leaders – to show how our experts have been used in the media to educate the public about health issues and research findings.

Perhaps the most beneficial experiences I have had at the Journalism School has been graduate school. My first semester in my core classes, *Mass Media Seminar* with Dr. Monique Luisi and *Qualitative Research Methods* with Dr. Yong Volz, challenged me and forced me to start thinking critically about the range of issues pertinent to journalism and mass media, how it is made, the people who make it, and the people who consume it. *Mass Media Seminar* was crucial in understanding how to apply theory to research and to understand what constituted a good research. Not only that, I have learned to appreciate theory in an academic environment and learned how to apply it to practical problems. I plan to enter the workforce after graduation but can carry what I have learned in *Mass Media Seminar* and theories to solve problems. *Qualitative Research Methods* laid the groundwork for my research design. It taught me how to choose the right method to elicit responses in order to achieve a specific objective, and how to analyze and create a strong research design. Additionally, qualitative research methods are frequently used in strategic communications and gaining a full understanding of it will allow me to do an even better job in the profession I choose. I enjoyed qualitative research so much I enrolled in *Advanced Qualitative Research Methods* with Dr. Yong Volz. Qualitative research can be tricky when interpreting data because of its subjective nature. This class was important to me because I wanted to learn the concepts of analyzing qualitative data,

which will help me produce quality findings for my research and carry the concepts with me in my future work in strategic communications. For this class, I am also conducting a textual analysis research of how corn farmers use online agricultural forums. This exploratory study will give me more experience with the topic, and conducting research and writing a research paper.

Additionally, the strategic communications courses I took in graduate school have been invaluable. *Branded Storytelling* with Jim Flink and David Germano taught me about content marketing and the importance of research when developing a deterministic target market. I was able to put the concepts I learned into practice by conducting research and creating a treatment plan for a distillery in Tennessee. *Public Relations* with Jon Stemmler helped me refine the public relations work I did with MU Health Care and think differently about the approaches I take. In addition, *Public Relations* allowed myself and a team of graduate and honors students to conduct research and create a campaign for General Motors (GM). This experience allowed me to understand how to plan for a public relations campaign and what a public relations campaign entailed. *Management of Strategic Communications* with Jamie Flink was crucial in helping me discover what I want to do professionally. This course allowed me to work with a talented group of students on a campaign for the Chicago-based restaurant, Portillo's. I worked on the qualitative research and consumer insight team conducting focus groups and turning data into insights. The skills and theories I learned in *Qualitative Research Methods* played a large role here. I was able to help guide my team in research and how to analyze the vast amount of data collected.

Professional direction

All my unconventional experiences have led me to realizing how to use my talents. Jamie Flink introduced me to account planning in *Management of Strategic Communications*. Account planning is exactly what I enjoy doing – using logical and analytical skills to consume and synthesize vast amounts of data, then using intuitive and qualitative research skills to interpret that data in an interesting way. Every experience I have had has led me to this professional direction. My research courses speak for themselves, but my journalism experiences have taught me how to turn jargon and vast amount of information into something interesting and consumable for an audience. Similar to journalism, account planning is about serving the consumer or audience and giving them a voice. My project with Tyson Local Grain Services will allow me to do similar work to what an account planner would do – conduct secondary and primary research, turn data into insights, and help create a strategic communication plan. After graduation, I would like to work in either a corporate communications setting or for a public relations or advertising agency doing account planning. Five years down the road, I would still like to be working in account planning or consumer/audience research, though in a higher position than entry level.

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS COMPONENT

Logistics

I will be working with Tyson Foods, Inc. subsidiary Tyson Local Grain Services (LGS) at its headquarters in Springdale, Arkansas, doing work similar to account planning and creating a strategic communication plan for Tyson LGS. This placement will allow me to use the journalism, strategic communications and research skills I gained as an undergraduate and graduate student. The specific skills I will use include qualitative research and analysis, critical thinking in turning data into insights, writing, and presenting the research insights. The position will be paid and begin June 4, 2018 and end November 9, 2018. I will work Monday through Friday for 40 hours per week from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Maggie Jo Hansen, marketing manager, will be my direct supervisor. We will work side-by-side and have frequent contact throughout the day. We will also have weekly meetings where I will update her on my projects and discuss new ones.

Work description and dissemination

My responsibilities will include brainstorming and creating content for the Tyson LGS blog. These blog posts will be disseminated on the blog, private Facebook group and quarterly newsletters that I will also create. Additionally, I will help manage tradeshow applications and sponsorships, and help recruit farmers at the tradeshow we get accepted to. My main project, which will consume the majority of my time, is researching and creating a strategic communication plan for Tyson LGS. The communication plan will be presented to the direct team and implemented after approval. Additional work will also be assigned based on the needs of other staff members.

Evidence of work

Abundant physical evidence must be included in the final project to show for my work and professional development. Each week, I will write a detailed list of what activities and projects I completed or worked on. The list will be in a bulleted format and entail how the week was spent. In addition, there will be a section dedicated to my research project status detailing what has been accomplished each week, e.g., focus group participant recruitment, analysis, etc. These weekly field notes will be emailed to my committee members every Friday before 5 p.m. during my time with Tyson Foods. Additionally, the strategic communication plan and blog posts I create will be included in the final project.

RESEARCH ANALYSIS COMPONENT

EXPLORING THE MEDIA USES OF FARMERS WHEN ESTABLISHING THEIR BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS: A CASE STUDY OF TYSON LOCAL GRAIN SERVICES (LGS)

Introduction/Research Problem

This research proposal is for a professional project with Tyson Foods, Inc. subsidiary, Tyson Local Grain Services (LGS). The international leader in the food industry relies heavily on corn to feed and produce its millions of chickens. The corporation developed a department, Tyson Local Grain Services (LGS), to strategically buy corn from farmers near and around their poultry farmers – cutting costs on transportation and costs of paying the middlemen. Buying corn directly from local farmers also allows the money being spent on corn to stay in those local communities. The challenge Tyson LGS faces is reaching out to farmers in its many locations. This is due to the lack of knowledge of the specific media channels corn farmers are utilizing to establish these business-to-business relationships, and how and why farmers are using them.

This research will explore the media channels farmers use to establish business relationships through four focus group discussions (FGDs) with six farmers each from Missouri, Arkansas and Oklahoma. Little research has been done on this topic of farmers and their use of media channels. The few similar studies found were conducted quantitatively (Doerfert, Graber, Meyers, & Irlbeck, 2012; Shaw et al., 2015; Van Dalsem, 2011). The gap provides a need for qualitative research to thoroughly understand

why and how farmers use media to establish business relationships. Identifying corn farmer's uses and gratifications of media channels, and when and why they adopt these media channels is important to ensure effective communications strategies.

Theory framework and literature review

The theoretical framework for this study draws on two theories: Rogers' (2003) diffusion of innovations theory and uses and gratifications theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973). The diffusion of innovations theory explains how new ideas, practice, or products are spread among groups of people. The dissemination follows an order of adopters: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards (Rogers, 2003). The focus of this theory is adoption of an innovation. The innovation's characteristics, from the adopter's perception, help explain the different rate of adoption. These include the economic or social advantage, how compatible it is with existing values, how complex the innovation is, trialability, and observability (Rogers, 2003). Diffusion of innovations has been applied in many disciplines (Rogers, 2003) and cited in numerous studies, particularly the adoption of new online media. The theory has been used to understand why some users are leaving specific media platforms for others (Coursaris, Yun, & Sung, 2010) and to find specifically who is using certain technologies (Peng & Mu, 2011).

Media channels, or the different platforms users utilize to get information, can be broken into two categories: Traditional media (TV, newspapers, magazines, radio, billboards, mail, and face-to-face) and new media (social media, websites, blogs, email, and mobile apps). Uses and gratifications (U&G) theory is relevant to media channels because of its origination in communications literature (Whiting & Williams, 2013).

Traditionally, communication researchers asked the question of what the media do to people. A uses and gratifications (U&G) approach was first formally outlined by Katz (1959) when he instead asked what people do with the media. Uses and gratifications (U&G) theory addresses how people choose particular media to fulfill certain needs they expect to be met. The basic goals of uses and gratifications theory, as outlined by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch in 1974, are: "(a) to explain how people use media to gratify their needs, (b) to understand motives for media behavior, and (c) to identify functions or consequences that follow from needs, motives, and behavior" (cited in Bryant & Zillmann, 1994, p. 527). The core assumption of U&G is that the audience is active, not passive, in choosing media and content to fulfill their needs and wants. Their selection and use of media is purposive and motivated to satisfy their social and psychological needs for desires (Katz, 1959). U&G also emphasizes motives, attitudes, and behaviors of media consumption varies by individual or group.

Recent studies have explored major trends in U&G and applied the framework to studies about new media and different genres (Papacharissi, 2009). One of these new media is social media. Whiting and Williams (2013) explored the U&G that consumers receive from using social media. They found ten U&G relevant to social media including interaction, information seeking, and entertainment (Whiting & Williams, 2013). The researchers cited that previous studies have provided that gratifications are "good predictors" of what media consumers use and will use again. U&G can be essential when developing "better scales and measurement instruments" for social media marketers (Whiting & Williams, 2013, p. 362). This statement is important to bear in mind when looking at U&G from an advertising and marketing perspective.

While many DOI and U&G studies have been conducted to explore various media and genres, few have looked at farmers and their media use. Doerfert et. al. (2012) examined the understudied phenomenon of what traditional and/or social media channels farmers use, focusing on farmers in Texas. Drawing on the U&G theory, the researchers conducted a quantitative survey and found that farmers in Texas utilized traditional media and were starting to use new media. Agricultural magazines were used as the primary channel for information seeking and decision making, and social media was not used in any form to assist in decision making or finding new products or services (Doerfert et al., 2012). Shaw et al. (2015) took this research one step further and explored the current online communication tools agriculturalists, or farmers, used for personal and business reasons. They found websites and Facebook were regularly used among the participants for personal and business use. About one third of the respondents indicated that websites were the only medium they used every day for business purposes (Shaw et. al., 2015). Additionally, the study uncovered that not as many farmers used online communication tools for business purposes and noted that these tools may be in the initial stages of adoption for this group.

Deficiencies in Prior Literature

Research on what types of media channels farmers use for personal and business purposes have been studied by Shaw et al. (2015) and Doerfert, Graber, Meyers, and Irlbeck (2012). Both studies were conducted quantitatively, which provided insight into patterns of farmer's media use but did not explore the thorough reasons why and how farmer's use media channels. Qualitative methods, such as focus groups or in-depth interviews, would benefit this phenomenon by exploring why farmers choose certain

media and how they use them. In addition, the participants used for Shaw et al. (2015) and Doerfert et al. (2012) are not generalizable to this current study or beyond the niche groups they selected to study. Shaw et al. (2015) used young or beginning farmers from three states, with the average age of 39 years-old, which is significantly younger than the average U.S. farmer age of 58.3 (USDA, 2012). The majority of farmers who do business with Tyson Foods LGS is in the 45-64 age range. However, this does not mean this study can be generalizable either.

Rationale and Purpose Statement

The practical implication of this proposed research is the detailed findings could provide insights that benefit communications strategies for other organizations and businesses working with corn farmers. In a time where the consumer journey is no longer linear and multiple disruptors exist in advertising, it is imperative to understand niche audiences and their media consumption behaviors in order to effectively reach and build a relationship with them. The qualitative data gathered from this study will also provide the preliminary data that could inform quantitative studies, such as surveys, to generalize to the entire population of corn farmers. The theoretical implications will expand on the uses and gratifications theory and diffusion of innovations theory. By researching this understudied phenomenon among this particular group, we can better understand the motives, attitudes and behaviors of media consumption by corn farmers. The research proposal will try to answer these research questions:

RQ1: What media channels are corn farmers utilizing to establish their business relationships?

RQ2: How are farmers using these media channels?

RQ3: Why are farmers using specific media channels over others to establish business relationships?

Methods

Four FGDs will be used to elicit the responses needed to answer the research questions. There is an important need for four FGDs because qualitative studies require in-depth data and the only way to do this is to conduct more than one FGD. This method is the most appropriate because the objectives of analyses are to explore corn farmer's current behaviors and feelings about media uses in relationship with businesses. Each FGD will be 90-120 minutes with minigroups, consisting of a homogeneous group of six participants. Greenbaum (1993) states that some researchers like to use minigroups rather than full groups, which consists of 8-10 participants, because "they feel they can gain more in-depth information from smaller groups" (Greenbaum, 1993, p.3). With a smaller group, participants will have more time each for input. Although FGDs elicit in-depth data, they lack in a few areas. It is important to be aware of participant's and their hesitance to express their honest thoughts. FGDs can also be expensive if incentives are involved.

Demographic Criteria

Participants will be recruited from farmers who have and continue to sell their grain to Tyson Foods LGS. Access to their contact information will be simple because every farmer has a profile with their contact information listed on the company server. The researcher will retrieve the contact information from the Tyson LGS database. These

profiles show that farmers who make the decisions and sell the grain are male Caucasians ranging from ages 25 to 80. Age will not be a criterion in this study as having a good range of ages in each FGD will produce a true cross sample of experiences. Instead, participants will be selected based on how often they sell to the company. In order to answer the research questions and apply the diffusion of innovations theory to better understand this niche group and their media uses, the researcher will conduct FGDs with active and less active corn farmers. This comparative study will allow the researcher to look at why some farmers aren't as receptive as others. The first two FGDs in Southwest Missouri and Northwest Arkansas will consist of six active farmers each. The last two FGDs in mid-Missouri and Eastern Oklahoma will consist of six less active farmers each. For the purpose of this study, participants must also not be experts in marketing or communications and not have participated in a qualitative research in the past six months. Screening out anyone who has a background in marketing or communications will exclude any domineering participants. Relative newcomers to studies are better than participants who have participated in a qualitative research within the past six months because their reactions will be more spontaneous.

The FGD locations were chosen for two reasons: convenience and Tyson LGS owns feed mills in each location. Emails will be sent out to the selected focus group participants with a deadline to accept or decline by. In the scenario a participant chooses not to participate, the invitation email will be sent to a back-up farmer. There will be a list of additional back-up farmers in case the initial selected farmers cannot participate. Phone calls will follow the emails to assure the farmers know what and why they are asked to participate. Participants' identities will be kept confidential. Because the FGDs

will be conducted face-to-face, it is automatically labeled as confidential as the researcher will be able to identify who provided the data (Statistics Solutions, 2009). The data collected will be kept in a secure environment so the participants can be unidentifiable. The researcher will store the raw data, i.e., video recordings and transcripts, in her private external hard drive and locked in a drawer. The researcher will make ascertain no identifying values can link the information to the participant in the final report. Additionally, the data will be analyzed at the group level. Each participant will be incentivized with \$25 gift cards funded by the Division of Applied Social Sciences through the University of Missouri College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources. FGDs will take place in each of the selected locations so participants won't have to travel. The researcher will contact University Extension offices in each of the target areas and ask to use its facilities for the FGDs. Below are the potential University Extension offices in each selected location:

- Southwest Missouri:
 - Southwest Regional Office, MU Extension
3003 E. Chestnut Expwy., RDI Bldg., Ste. 200
Springfield, MO 65802
Phone: 417-865-0707
Email: swrd@missouri.edu
Website: <http://extension.missouri.edu/swregion>
- Mid-Missouri:
 - MU Extension in Pettis County
1012A Thompson Blvd.
Sedalia, MO 65301
Phone: 660-827-0591
Email: Pettisco@missouri.edu
Website: <http://extension.missouri.edu/pe ttis>
- Northwest Arkansas:
 - Washington County, Arkansas Cooperative Extension Office
2536 N. McConnell Ave.
Fayetteville, AR 72704
Phone: 479-444-1755
Email: washington-fayetteville@uaex.edu

- Eastern Oklahoma:
 - Adair County Extension Office
Oklahoma State University
220 W Division St/Courthouse Basement
Stillwell, OK 74960-3039
Phone: 918-696-2253
E-mail: marty.green@okstate.edu
Website: <http://countyext2.okstate.edu>

Measurement

The focus group discussion will be structured around an interview guide, a list of open-ended questions. A set of predetermined semi-structured questions will be constructed ahead of time and be theory-based. However, the researcher will make time and room for questions that arise during the discussion. According to Harrell (2009), semi-structured interviews collect detailed information in a style that is conversational for participants. This type of interview is typically used when a researcher's goal is to delve deep into a topic and understand the answers the participants provide (Harrell, 2009). An example of possible questions can be seen in Figure 1. The aim of the FGD is to foster a free-flowing discussion. Ideally, the participants' own comments will stimulate and influence the sharing of others in the group. The researcher will incorporate creative techniques to elicit the responses needed including, drawing and showing examples. The videotaped discussion will be transcribed. Per the University of Missouri Institutional Review Board (IRB), the raw data, i.e., video recordings and transcripts, will be stored in the researcher's private external hard drive and locked in a drawer. These transcripts along with notes taken during the discussion by the moderator/researcher and one scribe will aid the researcher in interpreting the data through open coding. The researcher will prepare a summary of the focus group reports that cover the various themes and participant views. The researcher will take on the epistemological orientation of social

constructivism, which will guide the analysis process. Social constructivism argues that reality and the meaning or categories that frame everyday life are created socially. This perspective, in terms of FGD analyses, emphasizes that group members collaborate on “some issue, how they achieve consensus (or fail to), and how they construct shared meanings about products, communications, or social concerns” (Stewart, Shamdasani, & Rock 2007). However, the researcher is aware of possible deviant cases. These dissenters will be analyzed after each FGD to help the researcher determine the extent to which the data that contributed to the theme reached saturation (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, & Zoran, 2009). Below is a descriptive protocol of the analysis process:

- **Transcribe the FGDs**
- **Vertical analysis of transcripts and summaries**
 - The researcher will initially vertically read through every transcript and its summary, soaking in the data.
- **Horizontal reading**
 - In the second read-through, the researcher will code and highlight things that are interesting and, additionally, abstract the data most salient in order to answer the research questions. Dey notes that “abstraction is a means to greater clarity and precision in making comparisons” (Dey, 1993, p. 94).
- **Coding/creating and assigning categories**
 - The data will be organized by grouping “like with like” (Dey, 1993, p. 95). During this step, the researcher will look for patterns or variations in the data.
 - This coding process is used to simplify or reduce data, and make it easier for the researcher to retrieve “chunks or segments” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 28) of verbatim data that share a similar category. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) states that attaching codes and creating categories allow researchers a way to identify and reorder data, and, ultimately, make the data be thought about in new and different ways.
- **Linking data and making connections**
 - Coding and categorizing organizes and reduces data, but can also break up the data or hinder the researcher in understanding or remembering how the data interacts. To capture this information, linking is necessary (Dey, 1993).
 - Linking data involves recognizing substantive rather than formal relations between things (Dey, 1993). Formal relations look at how data are similar or different, while substantive relations focus on how things within the

data interact. Linking will allow the researcher to make sense of connections.

- **Infer the meaning**
 - Through linking, the researcher will interpret the meaning. This includes analyzing the words participants used and seeing if there were any emotions behind those words. The theories and literature review will help the researcher explain the findings from the analysis.
- **Check the quality and integrity of the data/corroborating evidence**
 - In the final step of analyzing, the researcher will corroborate the evidence. Dey (1993, p. 224) suggests asking yourself the following questions:
 - Is it a product of my own observation or a result of hearsay?
 - Have any other people made or reported the same observation?
 - In what circumstances was the observation made or reported?
 - How reliable are those making or reporting the observation?
 - What motivations may have influenced how the observation was reported?
 - What biases may have influenced how the observation was made or reported?

Validity and Reflection

Several strategies will be used to improve the validity of the research. The first is a pilot study of the FGD. This will allow for any corrections in the discussion guide to make it more robust for the study at hand. The use of previous studies (Doerfert, Graber, Meyers, & Irlbeck, 2012; Shaw et al., 2015; Van Dalsem, 2011) will help foreground theories and help the researcher gain a better understanding of the topic. FGD participants will be told ahead of time that it will be videotaped, thus allowing an audit trail to transcribe the discussion. The transcripts also provide low inference descriptors, or direct quotes from participants. This will allow readers to test the researcher's arguments, show how the researcher analyzes and includes the original data. Participant feedback will be utilized for the FGD to ensure accurate interpretations. In addition, throughout the written research, transparency about the coding process and analysis will be described thoroughly for readers. Lastly, a journal will be kept for reflexivity purposes. There are a couple of challenges I intend to expect. Gaining rapport with this specific group and eliciting a

good discussion among the participants might be challenging. From experience, this demographic tends to be more closed-off. In addition, Tyson Foods LGS corn farmers are predominantly older Caucasian men. On the surface, as a young Asian female, this can be intimidating. However, I plan to share my agricultural and farming background with the focus group participants in hopes of building good rapport.

Figure 1 FGD Discussion Guide Example

RQ1: What media channels are corn farmers utilizing to establish their business relationships?

- Where do you get new information about ag businesses?
- In front of you is a list of media channels, circle the ones you use or have influenced you to find new products or services.
- Write a list of all electronic devices you use and write what for. (*DOI, complexity*)
 - Probe: Why do you use X device for Y reason? Try to understand the complexity aspect.
- How did you learn about the media channels you use? (*Trialability and observability*)
 - Probing for adoption or rejection. How were you introduced to this media channel?

RQ2: How are farmers using these media channels?

- Write down what a typical day looks like, including any time you have interactions with media channels. (*DOI/UG: Compatibility and gratification*)
 - Probe for media uses throughout the day.
 - What media channels are they using, and for what purpose(s)?
- How do you use media channels to make decisions?
- Why do you use media channels to make decisions?
- Describe the different media channels you use for business purposes.

RQ3: Why are farmers using specific media channels over others to establish business relationships?

- Take a piece of paper and jot down three things that are most important to you when you want to do business with a company.
- Let's list these on the flip chart. If you had to pick only one factor that was most important to you, what would it be?
- Draw your journey of finding information about an agriculture business until you make a purchase.
 - Probe for the consumer decision journey. (*DOI*)

- What were the media channels used in the consumer decision journey?
 - Probe: Why did you use X media channel before moving on to Y media channel?
 - What are the advantages of using the type of communication tool you use over others?
- Describe the most important or frequent people you interact with when making decisions on your farm?
 - Probe: Why them?
 - Do they have an influence in your decisions?
 - How do they help you make decisions?
 - Probe for observability/trialability
- Of all the things we discussed, what to you is the most important?

PUBLICATION POSSIBILITIES

The nature of this project lends itself to several different avenues of publication.

This scholarly research project could be published in a journal such as *Journal of Advertising*, *Journal of Advertising Research*, or *Journal of Applied Communications*.

Publication could also be possible at professional conferences, such as American Association for Agricultural Education Research (AAAE) conference, National Agri-Marketing Association (NAMA) conference, or National Association of Farm Broadcasters (NAFB) conference.

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IRB Approval

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Tue 5/1/2018 11:01 PM

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Project ID	IRB #2011289 C
Review ID	236818
Project title	EXPLORING THE MEDIA USES OF FARMERS WHEN ESTABLISHING THEIR BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS: A CASE STUDY OF TYSON LOCAL GRAIN SERVICES (LGS)
Principal investigator	Yang, Hli
Primary contact	Yang, Hli

As Principal Investigator, I am personally responsible for the conduct and supervision of my human subjects research and for protecting the rights, safety, and welfare of the subjects enrolled in my research. I will ensure my research is conducted in an ethical manner, and in accordance with all Federal, State, and Local laws and regulations, Institutional Policies, and requirements or determinations set forth by the MU IRB.

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