Integrated Marketing Communication Strategies in Ohio Agribusinesses

THESIS

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Abstract

Currently we encounter over 3,000 messages daily through a plethora of channels of communication (Brock & Green, 2005). With endless methods of exchanging information, it is important for businesses to harness the most effective method to reach their target audience. It is important for every industry to cater to their specific consumer base to save time and money, and the agricultural field is not any different. The researchers of this study chose to focus on the business perspective of the communications process, specifically Ohio agribusinesses.

The purpose of this study was to explore how agribusinesses are communicating with, and marketing to their current and potential customers. The researchers sought to identify effective communication patterns used between all Ohio agribusinesses and relay their strategies to smaller agribusinesses who often do not have time to dedicate to the area. The theories that guided this study were media richness theory and the uses and gratifications approach.

The design of the study was a questionnaire that was mailed to members of the Ohio AgriBusiness Association (OABA). Descriptive statistics were calculated and reported on 102 questionnaires. Additionally, open-coding was used to analyze qualitative portions of the study.

Results from the study show that many of the marketing and communications responsibilities fall to agribusiness owners, who typically aren't trained in the field. The
postal service is the most frequently used method of communication, and respondents believe that face-to-face communication is the most effective. Ohio agribusinesses tend to use traditional media, but understand the value of integrating newer communication methods into their businesses.
Dedicated to my family who instilled in me the value of hard work and dedication, and to my best friend Johnchristian Carl, who has supported and encouraged me every step of the way.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background and Setting

The traditional stereotype of agriculture as being a depiction of older men inbib-overalls, beside a red barn, with crops in the background (Rhoades & Irani, 2009) is not an accurate portrayal of the industry in the 21st century. Agriculture no longer solely reflects the cultivation of a field and production of livestock, but encompasses advanced technology and scientific practices. Innovations such as disease resistant crops, machinery guided by Global Positioning Systems, and environmentally responsible farming practices are shaping agriculture into a modern industry (USDA, 2003). Not only is there a stronger presence of science and technology, but also a new kind of business sense among agriculturalists. Business-savvy farmers are devoting more time to developing marketing strategies to ensure the success of their enterprise (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005).

The development of the agribusiness sector can be largely attributed to the evolution of the agricultural industry. A study by Edwards and Shultz (2005) explains how agribusinesses have developed extensively in only two generations. "In 1955 John Davis defined [agribusiness] in terms of a fenced pasture; agribusiness centered on farms and commodities produced on them" (Edwards & Shultz, 2005, pg. 57). This definition
was more applicable when agribusinesses were only concerned with making the most of food and fiber production.

Agribusinesses in the 20th century were centered around the family farm and immediately relevant supply inputs, production, processing, and distribution (Edwards & Shultz, 2005). Generally each agribusiness would provide a single product, like tractors or fertilizer, or process one commodity, such as milk, grain, or fruit (Edwards & Shultz, 2005). Today, agribusinesses no longer deal exclusively with on farm activities but encompass a wider range of actions such as being market oriented while sustainably orchestrating food, fiber, and renewable resources (Edwards & Shultz, 2005). The trend of being attuned to market needs emerged around the 90s (Streeter, Sonka, & Hudson, 1991) and was preceded by a production and sales focus in marketing products.

The production orientation marketing strategy was developed in the early 20th century; this type of marketing refers to manufacturers' mindset that they knew what consumers needed better than the consumers themselves (Grewal & Levy, 2010). Retailers were considered a place to hold the goods until the customer needed them. Agribusinesses around this time that were centered around selling commodities were driven by economic incentives to maximize production while maintaining low costs (Streeter, et al., 1991). In order to produce large quantities at a low cost they maintained coarse grades and standards which converted undifferentiated commodities into affordable food (Streeter, et al., 1991).

The sales oriented era followed production and occurred because of a surplus of goods. The Great Depression and World War II taught customers to consume less, or
manufacture what they needed themselves. Businesses attempted to sell the extra goods by manipulating consumer tastes and preferences (Streeter, et al., 1991) through resorting heavily to personal selling and advertising (Grewal & Levy, 2010).

A majority of successful businesses have transitioned to a value oriented-market driven strategy; they focus on discovering and satisfying customer wants and needs (Grewal & Levy, 2010). “For the first time in the history of American agriculture, the end consumer-not the producers or packers- now drives the entire food chain” (Streeter, et. al., 1991).

Agricultural Communication Trends

The value oriented-market driven outlook mentioned above is how many successful businesses sell products today. Communication is the key to discovering and understanding consumer tastes and preferences and integrating them into businesses’ marketing strategy. There are many channels that can be used to exchange information from advertising to electronic media (Grewal & Levy, 2010).

Advertising is thought to be a glamorous form of communication that large corporations spend millions of dollars on annually. In the agricultural industry there are a few large agribusiness corporations that have million dollar advertising budgets, but generally advertising is distributed differently in this field (Duft, 2011). Commodity groups receive advertising allowances through mandatory check-off programs, so inherently they utilize their ability to advertise (Chung & Kaiser, 2000). Agricultural trade associations and major manufacturers of agricultural production inputs are also heavy advertisers (Duft, 2011). Agribusiness retailers do not allocate as much money to
this type of communication because they operate within a smaller market with more select clientele, and are less dependent on advertising to maintain a competitive position in their market (Duft, 2011).

Another form of communication used by agribusinesses is print media. In 2000, farm publications were still considered to be the main source of information for farmers (Boone, Meisenbach, & Tucker, 2000). Younger agriculturalists obtain information from publications more often than the older generation, but they do not use the print form exclusively (Boone et. al, 2000). Many of the farm publications, such as Successful Farming and Farm Journal, also offer electronic versions which can be accessed through the internet (Boone et. al., 2000).

The advent of the internet brought a new spectrum of opportunities to enable agriculturalists to access information, and for agribusinesses to communicate with their customers. Agribusinesses utilize internet functions in an attempt to cater to their customer base, increase awareness of their company and its products, promote strategic or policy related positions, sell more products (Hooker, Heilig & Ernst, 2001), increase communication with customers, and to enhance their marketing potential (Palmer & Steed, 2011). There are many ways for businesses to achieve these goals including email, blogging, social networking, company websites, and in some cases e-commerce. Even with the vast array of opportunities, participants in the agricultural sector are often resistant to change, value tradition, and are not as familiar with information technology as other industries (Hooker, et al., 2001). Some agribusinesses are hesitant to go online because it takes time, thought, and money (Palmer & Steed, 2011).
Another form of communication that is utilized by agriculturalists is the radio. Farm radio is still highly valued by agriculturalists today; a study by the National Association of Farm Broadcasters showed that the most important reason for agriculturalists to listen to the radio was for commodity reports, followed by farm news and weather (Boone, et. al., 2000). Although farm radio is highly utilized, it is typically not where agribusinesses spend advertising dollars (Boone, et. al., 2000). In 2000, less than 7 percent of all agribusiness advertising spending were devoted to radio.

For any businesses' communication strategy to be successful they must send the right message, to the correct audience, at the most appropriate time; this is becoming more difficult as the media environment becomes more complicated (Grewal & Levy, 2010). Consumers are constantly changing where they turn to for information, and with the increasing media outlets it is easy for businesses' messages to be tuned out. It is important for agribusinesses to stay current with popular forms of media so that their messages can be heard.

*Trends in Media Consumption*

In any given day we are exposed to around 3,000 messages through different types of media (Brock & Green, 2005). Companies battle for consumer attention through channels including the internet, newspapers, magazines, television, and radio. The amount of time and money spent on these different channels is continuously changing along with what information we use each media for.

From digital immigrants to digital natives, it is no secret that the internet is influencing the way that most of us find information. The 2010 Digital Future Project
indicates that 82 percent of Americans use the internet ("Digital Future Project", 2010). A yearly poll taken by Harris Interactive indicates that the number of people and the amount of time they spend online has increased dramatically. In 2002, 140 million adults in the U.S. were accessing the internet for an average of seven hours per week. In 2009, the number rose to 184 million U.S. adults accessing the internet for an average of 13 hours per week (Miller & Washington, 2011).

Consumers use the internet in a variety of ways; according to the 2010 Digital Future Project 65 percent of Internet users made an online purchase and 96 percent use email ("Digital Future Project", 2010). Instant messaging is a tool used among certain age groups, but a relatively small number of all respondents use this feature ("Digital Future Project", 2010). Fifty-eight percent of internet users indicated that they visit social networking sites at least once per week ("Digital Future Project", 2010).

The growth of the internet has led to speculation as to the survival of print media. There is no doubt that newspapers have been impacted by this technology. Overall, daily newspaper readership reached its peak in 1984 with a circulation of 63.3 million, and has since decreased over 20 percent (UC Davis, 2010). In 2008 the US Census Bureau reported that American adults dedicated 169 hours in a year's time to reading the newspaper, which was a decrease from the 198 hours just five years earlier (U.S. Census, 2009). Consumer spending on newspapers has also declined from around $54 per person in 2003 to $43 in 2008 (U.S. Census, 2009).

Though there have been obstacles presented by the use of the internet, there is still a place for the newspaper industry. The Newspaper Association of America reported
over $5.5 billion ad sales in the first quarter of 2011, 85 percent of which were generated from print media (Moozakis, 2011). Digital ad sales are quickly rising, but not enough to drastically change print advertising in the foreseeable future (Moozakis, 2011). Printed newspapers are seen as more credible, more comfortable to read, and have a more sustainable advertising impact than online newspapers (Moozakis, 2011). "Print remains an integral part of the advertising campaign, it's just no longer the single piece" (Moozakis, 2011, pg. 1).

The magazine industry has also been impacted by the shift to digital press and has had to find a balance between print and online readership. Digital ad sales have risen exponentially (The Association of Magazine Media, 2012). Regardless of whether consumers are accessing magazines in print or digitally, 92 percent of adults in the U.S. read magazines (The Association of Magazine Media, 2012). Time that consumers spent reading magazines fluctuated slightly; people spent 128 hours reading magazines in 2008, and 125 hours in 2003 (U.S. Census, 2009). The Association of Magazine Media (2012) reports that consumers spend $300 million on magazines at newsstands, monthly.

Radio is another form of media that contributes to communication strategy. In 2003 it accounted for 836 hours of American adult's time, and fell to 716 hours in 2008 (U.S. Census, 2009). Consumer spending increased in this category from $.40 in 2003 to $10.25 in 2008 (U.S. Census, 2009). Internet radio as an interactive medium is becoming popular through sites like Pandora. An eMarketer Report (2011) estimates that 158 million internet users (68.2 percent) will be tuning in to online radio by 2015.
Problem Statement

People encounter numerous messages through multiple channels every day, which makes it difficult for any business to be noticed. Small agribusinesses are at a disadvantage because they typically do not have a marketing professional on staff, or the funds to allocate towards a communication budget. This study will address how agribusinesses are communicating messages through different media, and examine the most effective and efficient methods for disseminating information.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to describe how agricultural businesses use Integrated Marketing Communication strategies to effectively communicate with current and potential customers. The following objectives will be used to guide the study:

1. Identify who handles marketing and communication responsibilities in agribusinesses.
2. Identify the channels agribusinesses are using to communicate their messages.
3. Identify what channels agribusinesses use to communicate messages.
4. Describe what channels agribusinesses think that it is effective to communicate messages through.

Significance

Small businesses are very important to the U.S. economy; they have created 65 percent of the net new jobs over the last 17 years (Small Business Administration, 2011) and employ about half of the nation’s private sector workforce (The Small Business Economy: Report to the President, 2010). They also contribute a significant share of innovations and provide half of the nonfarm, private real gross domestic product (The
Small business Economy: Report to the President, 2010). With small businesses being of such importance to our nation it is in everyone’s best interest to see them survive.

Small businesses are beneficial to the U.S. economy, but they do face the risk of failure. In 2008, there were 195,830 small businesses in Ohio; in 2009, the number decreased to 189,099. This means that 6,731 small businesses closed their doors within a year (SBA, 2011). There are many reasons why small businesses do not succeed. According to Lussier’s S/F (success/failure) prediction model (2010), there are 15 variables that can determine the success or failure of a business. Some of the variables include marketing, planning, and education. The Small Business Administration (2011) suggests that a lack of experience is also a factor.

Another factor that plays a role in small businesses closing is staffing (Lussier & Halabi, 2010). According to the Small Business Administration (2011), 78.3 percent of all businesses do not have employees, and most employers have less than 20 employees. Less staff means less time to devote to marketing and communications. Small businesses also do not have much revenue to dedicate to a marketing budget.

With the above factors in mind, it is important to understand how agribusinesses are communicating with their customers. It would be beneficial to relay efficient and effective communication practices to small agribusinesses to save time and money; it will also give them more of an opportunity to thrive, and indirectly boost our nation's economy.
Definition of terms

Ohio AgriBusiness Association (OABA)

An Ohio based voluntary organization that "promotes an active, profitable and environmentally sensitive professional agribusiness industry by identifying and addressing emerging issues important to its members" (OABA website, 2011).

Agribusiness:

The United States Census Bureau arranges businesses by codes using the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). The NAICS “groups establishments into industries based on the activity in which they are primarily engaged. Establishments using similar raw material inputs, similar capital equipment, and similar labor are classified in the same industry. In other words, establishments that do similar things in similar ways are classified together” (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012, pg. 2). The system uses hierarchical coding and divides all economic activity into 20 sectors. Businesses are further broken down into subgroups, then specific industries. Forestry, fishing, hunting, and agriculture support is classified as a major business sector which “comprises establishments primarily engaged in growing crops, raising animals, harvesting timber and harvesting fish and other animals from a farm, ranch, or their natural habitats” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008, pg. 1). This grouping refers to the production side of agriculture, which is the 1 percent mentioned above. Agribusinesses can fall into many different sectors, depending on their type of economic activity.
Agribusinesses are not recognized as their own subcategory, but are intertwined throughout the system.

Small business

The Small Business Administration (SBA) classifies businesses according to the number of employees over the past 12 months, or by average annual receipts, and uses whichever number represents the largest part of the respective business (SBA, 2011). Different industries have different size standards, according to the NAICS. Agriculture is one of eight divisions that does not include a common pattern of size standards because of the wide variation in its structure (SBA, 2011). The most common figures that the SBA uses to identify small businesses is less than 500 employees or less than $7 million in average annual receipts (SBA, 2011). The NAICS reports data with employment-size categories including zero to four employees, less than 20 employees and less than 500 employees.

Marketing

Marketing, according to the American Marketing Association, is "the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, capturing, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value to customers, clients, partners, and society at large" (AMA, 2011, pg. 1).
This chapter examines theories of media richness as well as uses and gratifications as guiding principles in integrated marketing communication strategies.

**Media Richness Theory**

Media richness theory, sometimes referred to as information richness theory, was first conceptualized by Daft and Lengel in the 1980s. Daft and Lengel (1983) define richness as the potential information carrying capacity of data (Daft & Lengel, 1983) or the capacity of information to provide substantial new consensual understanding (Trevino, Lengel, Bodensteiner, Gerloff & Muir, 1990). According to Lengel (1983), the communication media used determines the richness of information processed.

Media richness theory is concerned with three main elements: reducing uncertainty and equivocality, examining media using four criteria, and ranking media richness using a hierarchical system. Uncertainty and equivocality are concerned with how easy it is to understand a given message. The criteria are groups of characteristics that analyze the richness of media. The hierarchy of media ranks forms of media based on their richness.

**Uncertainty and Equivocality**

This model proposes that media used for communication has varying abilities to reduce uncertainty and equivocality. Uncertainty in this case refers to the absence of
information; uncertainty will decrease as more information is presented (Daft & Lengel, 1986). "In an uncertain situation a consensual understanding already exists. The problem can be defined objectively and data can be collected to resolve to it" (Trevino et. al, 1990, p. 178). Less rich media can be used to fill the information gap since there is an agreement of the interpretation of the problem.

Equivocality deals with ambiguity, which is the existence of multiple, conflicting interpretations (Daft & Lengel 1986). Equivocality will be high when people's frame of references differ (Daft, Lengel & Trevino, 1987). Before a situation can be resolved, there must be an agreement on what the problem is. Rich media need to be used to enable each entity to modify their stance, so that a consensus on the matter can be achieved (Trevino et. al, 1990).

Daft and Lengel express that certain forms of media work better for some tasks than others. Forms of media differ in their ability to express information; more media richness is required to explain complex topics (equivocal situations), while less richness can be used to address simple ideas (uncertain situations).

Criteria for Determining Media Richness

Daft and Lengel (1983) considered four criteria to analyze richness: (1) feedback capability, (2) communication channels utilized, (3) source, (4) language. Later Daft, Lengel and Trevino (1987) modified the criteria to include:

1. Feedback: Immediate feedback allows miscommunications to be corrected, and for questions to be asked.
2. Multiple cues: Messages can be made of many different cues such as body language, voice inflection, words used, etc.

3. “Language variety: The range of meaning that can be conveyed with language symbols” (Daft et. al., 1987).

4. Personal focus: A message can have more meaning when emotions and feelings are attached.

**Hierarchy of Media**

From the criteria came a hierarchy of media. According to Daft and Lengel (1983) face-to-face interaction is the richest form because of the ability to provide instant feedback. A lack of understanding can be corrected with this medium. It also incorporates cues beyond spoken messages such as body language, facial expressions and tone of voice (Daft & Lengel, 1983).

The next step down in media richness is the use of the telephone as a medium. Immediate feedback can still be provided, but individuals are dependent on auditory cues to interpret the message (Daft & Lengel, 1983).

Written communication has less richness than the telephone; feedback is slow and there are limited auditory and visual cues available to interpret messages (Daft & Lengel, 1983). According to Daft and Lengel (1983) personalized written communication has more richness than anonymous flyers and bulletins.

The least rich form of media are formal numeric documents which do not achieve any of the four criteria established by Daft and Lengel. They have to capability of
communicating quantifiable aspects of organizations but do not possess natural language (Daft & Lengel, 1983).

The figure below illustrates the hierarchy of media richness, as outlined by Daft, Lengel and Trevino in 1987:

![Media Richness Hierarchy](image)

Figure 2.1. Media richness hierarchy

In later studies Daft, Lengel and Trevino evaluated additional forms of media including electronic mail and teleconferencing (Daft et. al, 1987). Electronic mail was placed in-between telephone and written communication in the hierarchy, and teleconferencing remained with the telephone level.
Another aspect of media richness that Daft, Lengel and Trevino (1987) considered was the use of media as it applied to routine versus non-routine messages. They found that using the richest medium was not necessarily always the most effective. Routine messages are simple and straightforward and using rich media to communicate this information leads to confusion (Daft & Lengel & Trevino 1987). On the opposite end of the spectrum, non-routine messages tend to be presented under time restraints and are often ambiguous, so a rich medium is required to exchange complicated information (Daft & Lengel, 1987).

In looking at media richness as it relates to effective advertising, television wins out over the radio. Edell and Keller (1989) found that there was a higher incidence of brand recall with TV than radio because of the presence of multiple cues including sight, sound, and motion (Keller, 1998). Seeing the advertisement also led to higher purchasing decisions and positive attitudes toward the brand (Simon & Peppas, 2004). Television has an advantage over print advertising when attempting to elicit an emotion response, but print media is more effective when establishing logical reasons for using a brand (Chaudhuri & Buck, 1995). Hover, Srivastava and Jacoby's research showed that an ad could be too rich, reinforcing Daft et al.'s suggestion that lean media should not be used to convey equivocal, uncertain messages (Hover, Srivastava & Jacoby, 1984).

The use of new media brings new elements into the model: time and familiarity. Dennis and Kinney (1998) suggested that computer-mediated-communication was a lean media because of the delay that occurs between sending a message and receipt of the message, as well as the lack of audio and visual cues. Conversely, Burke and
Chidambram (1999) found that people's perception of the richness computer-mediated-communication could change over time and develop characteristics similar to face to face communication. Carlson and Zmund (1999) found similar results with email; the more experience users gained with using email, the more efficiently and effectively they used it. This suggests that email could be used for complex tasks (Carlson & Zmund, 1999).

**Media Richness Theory in Practice**

Many studies completed in the field of media richness focus on internal communication in organizations. More research is needed to examine the media organizations use to communicate externally, however many of the elements of the studies mention can be associated with marketing practices.

Daft, Lengel and Trevino (1987) examined message equivocality and media richness from a managerial perspective. In this study, over 200 incidents of managerial communications were recorded from a petrochemical company. Managers had to describe recent incidents where they used various media. Overlapping incidents were eliminated, and 60 representative situations were selected for data collection. Each incident was rated according to ambiguous content on a scale of 1 (low equivocality) to 5 (high equivocality) by a panel of judges. Next, a sample of managers (not included in the first step) was asked what medium they would use to resolve the 60 incidents including letters, face-to-face, fliers, memos, telephone and public address systems. Of the sample of managers, 30 were evaluated for their overall performance and their media selection was analyzed (Daft et. al, 1987).
The study found that rich media were preferred for communicating messages with high equivocality, and lean media were preferred with unequivocal information. Findings show that oral media were preferred when it was difficult to achieve understanding between managers. When messages were more intuitive, managers were more likely to use written communication. Also, media selection patterns of managers may be a component of their performance (Daft et. al, 1987).

Another inter-organizational study by Trevino, Lengel and Daft (1987) looked at the impact of message ambiguity along with situational determinants and symbolic cues on media selection. Situational determinants refer to constraints such as time pressures, distance, expediency, or role-expectations. Availability of media was also considered a situational determinant, for example, having access to electronic mail (Trevino et. al, 1987).

Symbolic cues could be provided by the medium itself; the medium was sometimes considered the message (Trevino et. al, 1987). Managers could use the face-to-face medium to show concern or caring to those receiving the message. Use of teleconferencing, during this time, symbolized an image of glamour (Trevino et. al, 1987).

The study was conducted similarly to the above; managers were asked to describe a recent incident where they used various media to communicate. They were then asked to describe why the medium was selected. The reasons they gave were classified as either message content, symbolic cues, or situational determinants (Trevino et. al, 1987).
Results of the study show that the reasons managers used face-to-face communication were for non-routine messages, the need for auxiliary cues, the ability for discussion, and the desire to express emotions. It also supported the idea that more lean media, such as electronic mail and written media were preferred for unambiguous messages. The reasons that managers used this form of information exchange were for routine, one-way messages that required no feedback, as well as the need to send a well thought out message (Trevino et. al., 1987).

In regards to symbolic cues, managers used face-to-face to signal a encourage teamwork and convey informality. Both face-to-face and telephone were used to indicate urgency and to show personal concern. Written media were used to show authority, and to comply with protocol (Trevino et. al, 1987). Situational determinants such as time constraints and distance lead to use of the telephone and electronic mail (Trevino et. al, 1987).

A study by Trevino in 1990 looked at media choice by examining individual characteristics. Myers and McCaulley (1985) emphasized the importance of perception and judgment in the development of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, which is a measure of psychological types (Trevino, 1990). In this regard, a person with a judging attitude is concerned with "making decisions, seeking closure, planning operations, or organizing activities" (Myers & McCaulley, 1985). A person with a perceptive attitude is "open, curious, and interested" while tending to be more adaptable (Trevino, 1990). Trevino hypothesized that media choice would be different among the personalities. After administering a sequence of questionnaires to business school students, she found
that regardless of the personality type, rich media were used to convey highly equivocal messages. When approaching messages with less ambiguity, personality type did play a role; those with a perceiving attitude tended to choose more rich media, while those with a judging attitude went with more lean media (Trevino, 1990).

A more recent study by Kahai and Cooper (2003) applied the media richness theory to current technologies. Using two of the four criteria of media richness, feedback immediacy and cue multiplicity, three constructs were examined including social perceptions, message clarity and the ability to evaluate others (Kahai & Cooper, 2003). The media chosen to analyze the criteria in regard to the constructs were face-to-face, electronic meeting, electronic conferencing and electronic mail communication systems (Kahai & Cooper, 2003).

The researchers predicted that rich media would facilitate social perceptions as well as perceived ability to evaluate others' deception and expertise (Kahai & Cooper, 2003). Leaner media, such as electronic conferencing and electronic mail, were thought to be more appropriate for participants who had less task-relevant knowledge (Kahai & Cooper, 2003).

The study supported media richness theory; both criteria facilitated the social perceptions and perceived ability to evaluate others' deception and expertise concepts (Kahai & Cooper, 2003). Kahai and Cooper (2003) concluded that communication clarity did not fit with the other constructs and that it was dependent on participant task-relevant knowledge.
Simon and Peppas (2004) applied media richness theory to simple and complex websites. This study examined attitude toward the website and end user satisfaction of 555 people who were proficient at using the Internet. Four websites were used, and their richness was ranked by the amount of cues within the sites. The lean website included text only, and the richness increased with pictures, audio clips, and video clips (Simon & Peppas, 2004).

Simon and Peppas (2004) found that subjects preferred the richer form of presentation, regardless of the nature and complexity of the product. The researchers of this study suggest that media richness theory needs to be reevaluated and expanded to include applications of new media.

Uses & Gratifications Approach

As another way to understand media use, the beginnings of the uses and gratifications approach was seen in the early 1940s with Paul Lazarsfeld's Radio Project. Lazarsfeld first became interested in elements of music when he was a researcher at the Psychological Institute of the University of Vienna (Levy, 1982). He aimed to discover what structures of songs people enjoyed, and were most moved by (Levy 1982). Later, when he was the Director of the Office of Radio Research, Lazarsfeld reexamined audience reactions to the radio. Lazarsfeld worked with Frank Stanton, the head of audience research for CBS, to create the Lazarsfeld-Stanton Program Analyzer, which was a way to mechanically measure audience reactions (Levy, 1982).

Other early proponents of uses and gratifications theory include "Suchman (1942) on the motives for getting interested in serious music on radio; Wolfe and Fiske (1949)
on the development of children's interest in comics; [and] Berelson (1949) on the
functions of newspaper reading" (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1974, p.36). According to
Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974), all of the above studies had four attributes in
common, which led to a need for more research:

1. Statements were taken from participants in an open-ended way.

2. Qualitatively grouped gratification statements, ignoring the frequency of the
   statements within the population.

3. They did not explore links between gratifications and psychological and social
   origins of the needs.

4. They did not look for interrelationships between media functions.

Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974) took a different look at the uses of media and
aimed to quantify them from a social and psychological basis. They were concerned with
"(1) the social and psychological origins of (2) needs, which generate (3) expectations of
(4) the mass media or other sources which lead to (5) differential patterns of media
exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in (6) need gratifications and (7)
other consequences, perhaps mostly unintended ones" (Katz et al., 1974, p. 37).

Katz et al (1974) emphasized five elements that the model possesses:

(1) The audience is active and assumed to be goal directed (McQuail, 1972).

(2) Media choice lies with the audience member, not with the medium.

(3) Different media satisfy different human satisfaction needs.

(4) Individual audience members are aware of their own interests and motives in
   particular cases.
(5) Cultural significance needs should be noted in exploring uses and 
gratifications of various media.

McQuail (1994) reformulated Katz et al.’s initial proposition by suggesting that 
the statement be rephrased to read "(1) Personal social circumstances and psychological 
dispositions together influence both (2) general habits of media use and also (3) beliefs 
and expectations about the benefits offered by media, which shape (4) specific acts of 
media choice and consumption, followed by (5) assessments of the value of the 
experience (with consequences for further media use) and, possibly, (6) applications of 
benefits acquired in other areas of experience and social activity" (McQuail, 1994, pg. 
319).

McQuail (2000) later wrote that there are four general motives for media exposure 
including:

(1) Diversion from routine and emotional release.

(2) The need for companionship (social aspect).

(3) Personal identity including self-reference, reality exploration and value 
reinforcement.

(4) Surveillance as a form of information seeking.

Regardless of the particular motives identified the underlying assumptions are that 
the audience is conscious of their choices and needs, and that they logically choose the 
best medium to satisfy them (Potter, 2009).

Critics of uses and gratifications theory argue that a dichotomy between an active 
and passive audience is not realistic (Potter, 2009). People are not always aware of their
needs and therefore do not consciously make the best decision in regards to their media choice (Potter, 2009). Other researchers believe that the internet brings a new dimension and strength to the theory (Ko, Cho & Roberts, 2000). The internet by nature is interactive and requires its audience to intentionally choose websites (Rayburn, 1996). The interactivity of the internet encourages consumers to get involved in the persuasion process by giving them control over the advertising messages, amount of information, and the presentation order (Hoffman & Novak, 1996).

Carolyn Lin (1996) identified that surfing the internet satisfies psychological needs such as social identity, interpersonal communication, parasocial interaction, companionship, escape, entertainment, and surveillance. Korgaonkar and Wolin (1999) identified seven factors that motivate people to use the internet: (1) social escapism, (2) transactional security and privacy, (3) information, (4) interactive control, (5) socialization, (6) nontransactional privacy, and (7) economic motivation.

Uses and Gratifications Theory in Practice

Philip Palmgreen and J.D. Rayburn (1979) suggested that uses and gratifications approach was lacking in explanation of gratifications sought and obtained. The researchers noted that Katz et. al. mentioned that there is a distinction between prior expectations the audience has of various media and the satisfactions they get from using it (Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1979). Palmgreen and Rayburn aimed to solidify these entities as part of the theory.

In this study, Palmgreen and Rayburn (1979) examined the gratifications sought and gratifications obtained by viewers and non-viewers of public television. Their
hypothesis was that there would be less of a difference between gratifications sought and obtained in viewers as opposed to non-viewers (1979). Palmgreen and Rayburn (1979) also hypothesized that the smaller the difference in gratifications sought and obtained, the greater the exposure to public television.

Palmgreen and Rayburn conducted 526 phone interviews of Kentucky citizens (Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1979). Participants were asked to share the gratifications they sought by watching public television by rating statements orally, on a likert-type scale. They were then asked a series of questions about gratifications the viewers obtained, and non-viewers could have obtained on the same scale. Participants were also asked who made decisions of what to watch in their household, to evaluate the strength of their earlier responses (Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1979).

Palmgreen and Rayburn’s findings supported their hypotheses. They found that viewers of public television tended to seek gratifications of learning about people, places, things, and art (Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1979). Non-viewers sought to learn about people, places, things and communication utility (Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1979).

Payne, Severn and Dozier (1988) looked at uses and gratifications motives as a way to predict magazine readership. The study reviewed three standard motives while comparing consumer and trade magazines: environmental surveillance, environmental diversion, and environmental interaction (Payne, Severn & Dozier, 1988). Surveillance in this case refers to paying attention to media to gain information about the world, diversion is a way of relaxing or being entertained, and interaction is a means of preparing for later conversations (Payne et. al, 1988).
The tool Payne et al used (1988) was a questionnaire using likert type questions. Telephone surveys were also administered to a sample of 200 people. They found that consumer magazines were used more for diversion motives than in trade publications. Also, incidence of the environmental interaction was seen more with trade magazines than consumer publications. Readers of the trade magazines also scored higher in the environmental surveillance portion (Payne, et al, 1988).

A study by Stephanie Donohoe (1994) looked at what gratifications consumers seek in advertisements. She derived group discussions from a larger study of 18-24 year olds that looked at a broader picture of advertising in the audience’s everyday lives. Participants were asked to describe their experiences with advertisements in their own way; a specific set of advertisements were not used. Respondents mentioned ads they liked and remembered as well as their attitudes and interpretations of those ads.

From the conversations Donohoe (1994) classified gratifications of the respondents into six categories:

(1) Marketing uses, which is comprised of information, choice, competition, convenience, quality assurance/reassurance, consumption stimulation, vicarious consumption and added value.

(2) Structuring time

(3) Enjoyment which is made of entertainment, diversion, escapism and play.

(4) Scanning the environment which is comprised of surveillance, familiarity, checking out the opposite sex and education.

(5) Social interaction, which is made of family and peer relationships.
A study early in the life of the internet examined audience experience with five different company websites (Eighmey & McCord, 1998). The businesses chosen included a telecommunications company, television network, luxury candy business, packaged and canned food company, and a manufacturer of athletic shoes and sportswear. Based on previous research, Eighmey and McCord (1998) expected to find that the uses and gratifications of the sample would dominantly be entertainment and stimulation purposes. They also anticipated the presence of other dimensions including information, involvement with others, personal relevance, and confusion (Eighmey & McCord, 1998).

Thirty-one participants were asked to evaluate the five websites by filling out a questionnaire that included 80 scalar items. The scalar items were evaluative statements that were intended to gauge the reaction of the audience to the websites (Eighmey & McCord, 1998). The statements were in part derived from several themes of uses and gratifications of the web outlined by Williams, Phillips and Lum (1987). These themes included expanded choice, special qualities of interactivity and individualistic characteristics (Williams, Phillips & Lum, 1987).

Eighmey and McCord found results consistent with previous studies; elements involving entertainment value, personal relevance and informational purposes were the leading gratifications. A factor, deemed the continuing relationship, emerged in this
study. They found that websites with a personality that aligned with the audiences’ held their attention longer (Eighmey & McCord, 1998). Personal involvement was also found to be very important in reaching the audience, and accounted for the largest contributor of variance in the ratings (Eighmey & McCord, 1998).

Stafford, Stafford and Schkade (2004) further explored uses and gratifications of the internet, specifically looking to classify gratifications into three categories: process, content, and social gratifications. Content gratifications refer to the message and processes gratifications is concerned with the actual medium carrying the message (Stafford et al., 2004). Social gratifications were explored as a potential dimension of uses and gratifications.

Stafford et al. used a two stage research design, first constructing a list of terms to characterize typical uses and gratifications. The second stage used a factor analysis to categorize the terms into groups that represented specific audience gratifications (Stafford et al., 2004). To gather information about process gratifications, terms such as "resources", "search engines", "surfing", "technology", and "websites" were used. These words were associated with browsing and surfing the web (Stafford et al., 2004). Words like "education", "information", "knowledge", "learning", and "research" were used to indicate content gratification (Stafford et al., 2004). When examining social gratifications, "friends", "interactions", and "people" served as variables (Stafford et al., 2004).

The results supported the division of gratifications into process, content, and social gratifications (Stafford et al., 2004). The researchers made suggestions for practical
applications of the findings in businesses; they emphasized the content gratification as a need for information more than entertainment (Stafford et al., 2004). They also encouraged facilitation of the social capacity of the internet, specifically instant messaging (Stafford et al., 2004). Another suggestion made was to focus on making things easy to find online.

Summary

This chapter discussed media richness theory and the uses and gratifications approach. Media richness is an effective tool to evaluate if a message is being sent through the appropriate medium, based on its level of equivocality and uncertainty. In this study we will examine the type of media agribusinesses are using and how often they are using rich versus lean media for various types of messages. We will look at the use of routine versus non routine messages and their medium. Also, it is important to note the differences in richness characteristics in traditional and new media.

The plethora of media options and messages that are conveyed through them makes it difficult for any business to be heard. The uses and gratifications approach will help to look at why agribusinesses are using certain types of media to transmit messages. It will examine what media the companies think will satisfy various consumer needs, so that they have the best chance of effectively communicating information.
Chapter 3: Methodology

As the introduction and literature review has indicated, small agribusinesses are at a disadvantage in the field of communication and marketing. Individuals encounter up to 3,000 persuasive messages a day (Brock & Green, 2005), through multiple channels, which makes it difficult for any business to be noticed. One of the reasons why small businesses fail is because of the lack of communication experience (Lussier, 2010; SBA, 2011). Additionally, small businesses typically are not able to allocate much funding to communicating with current and prospective customers.

This study will address some of the concerns above. The specific problem being studied is that small agribusinesses do not have the resources to dedicate to discovering the most efficient process for communicating with their customers about different information, through the variety of media channels available.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study, as described in the introduction, was to describe how small Ohio agricultural businesses use integrated marketing communication strategies to effectively communicate with current and potential customers. The following objectives were used to guide the study:

1. Identify who handles marketing and communication responsibilities in agribusinesses.
2. Identify the channels agribusinesses are using to communicate their messages.
3. Identify what channels agribusinesses to communicate messages.
4. Describe what channels agribusinesses think that it is effective to communicate messages through.

Research Design

This applied research utilized a descriptive survey to gather information from a population of Ohio agribusiness professionals in the hopes to understand and describe their administration of integrated communication strategies. The survey instrument was mailed in January, 2012 to all businesses that were members of the Ohio AgriBusiness Association (OABA, N=240). The postal service was used instead of email at the request of OABA staff. The census study encompassed both qualitative and quantitative characteristics as a way to describe communication strategies.

Subject Selection

The target population for this study was OABA members. A list of addresses of Ohio agribusinesses was obtained from the OABA staff. Initially the researchers had difficulty accessing a population of small agribusinesses; the government does not classify agricultural businesses within one category because of the diversity of the industry. Since there was not a governmental database that included contact information of small agribusinesses available, OABA members were chosen to represent the agribusiness sector. The entire membership was used because of the lack of differentiation between small agribusinesses within the organization; the OABA classifies membership levels by annual income, not number of employees or the number
of different facility locations. The instrument addresses businesses’ membership level as well as perceptions of the business’ size to account for the lack of differentiation.

Selection error did not occur because the OABA assesses their list and deletes duplicates from their database. Also, everyone in the database had the option of being part of this study, so there will not be a greater chance for a participant to be selected over another because all businesses received a questionnaire.

There were no discrepancies between the actual population and the target population (frame error) because the sample was a census study; all businesses were asked to participate in the research.

A total of 102 questionnaires were returned out of the 240 mailed, giving a return rate of 40.5 percent. Of those returned, all were deemed usable. Early and late respondents were compared, and no difference was observed.

Limitations

A limitation of this study was the ability to not generalize the findings of the research beyond OABA members that choose to participate in the study. Since the questionnaire examined use of the postal service, there may be an argument that those who did not return the questionnaire do not use this as a form of communication or are different than those who did fill it out. Another factor limiting this study is respondent's ability to remember business practices that they are asked about. Also, the length of the instrument with the additional insert (which will be discussed below) may have deterred them from filling out the questionnaire.
Consent

Approval from the Ohio State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) was obtained (approval protocol number 2011E0673). The study is not of an experimental nature and the target population is of adult age, therefore an exempt research form was submitted to IRB. Upon receiving IRB approval, research commenced (see Appendix A).

A written consent form was included at the beginning of the questionnaire informing agribusinesses of the study's purposes and their rights as a participant. The OABA provided an incentive of a $250 gift card to Best Buy. Regardless of their participation in the study, all OABA members were eligible to win the incentive.

Instrumentation

The instrument used in this research was a questionnaire administered by mail (see Appendix B). It was developed based upon the research questions for the study. Both open and closed-ended questions were used to collect the data for the research objectives. Open-ended questions were used when there were multiple possible answers or when the answers are unknown, such as a justifications or opinions (Ary, et al., 2009). Closed-ended questions are used when all answers are known or limited (Ary, et al, 2009). In this study, closed-ended questions included checklists and scaled items. The questionnaire included twenty-nine questions on six pages, in addition to a cover page, consent form, and an insert from the OABA. The insert included a letter from president of the OABA, as well as seven questions, specifically for the OABA's use. It was printed in a hard-copy format at request of the OABA staff.
According to Ary et al. (2009) questionnaires should be ordered in an appealing way. Questions that are easy and will hold the interest of the respondents should be placed in the beginning, while demographic and other uncomfortable information should be placed toward the end (Ary, et al., 2009). Based on these guidelines the questions were ordered in three broad categories.

The first category included questions regarding how often the business uses various media and what information they communicate through them. Types of information communicated included new product information, product advertisements, general store information, discount and promotion information and government legislation information. Examples of these questions are in the tables below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often does your business use the postal service to communicate with your customers?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ Never □ Yearly □ Monthly □ Weekly □ Daily</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What do you used the postal service for? (Check all that apply)

- □ New product information
- □ Product advertisements
- □ General store information
- □ Discount/promotion information
- □ Government legislation information

- □ We don’t use the postal service

- □ Other: ________________________________________________

Figure 3.1. Examples of questions identifying channel use and frequency.
The next set of questions asked businesses to rank what the most effective and efficient channels were to communicate different information, in their opinion. Examples of these questions are in the tables below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do you feel is the most effective tool to advertise products to customers? (Please rank the top 10, 1 being the most effective, 10 being the least)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>__Postal Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__In store flyers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__Social media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__Online advertising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__Billboards/road signs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Why? ______________________________________________________

Figure 3.2. Examples of questions identifying channel use and frequency.

How often does your business update your website?

- [ ] Never
- [ ] Yearly
- [ ] Monthly
- [ ] Weekly
- [ ] Daily

b. What does your business use your website for? (Check all that apply)

- [ ] New product information
- [ ] Product advertisements
- [ ] General store information
- [ ] Discount/promotion information
- [ ] Government legislation information
- [ ] We don’t have a website

- [ ] Other: ____________________________________________________________________

Figure 3.3. Example of questions identifying effective channels of communication.

35
The last section addressed demographic information. Participants were asked to indicate their gender, education level, employment length, and position within the company.

Ary, et al. (2009) defines validity as "the extent to which an instrument measured what it claimed to measure". It also encompasses the interpretation and meaning of the instrument (Ary et al., 2009).

The questionnaire was pilot tested, to ensure face validity, by seven of the OABA Board of Directors in December of 2011. The OABA Board of Directors is comprised of business professionals that are familiar with the agricultural industry. Also, a panel of experts comprised of five OSU Agricultural Communication, Education, and Leadership faculty and graduate students reviewed the questionnaire for content validity as well as vague questions, as well as formatting and grammatical errors.

Due to the suggestions of both the OABA Board of Directors and the panel of experts, the second section was changed from establishing the most effective channel to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>___Postal Service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___In store flyers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___Social media</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___Online advertising</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___Billboards/road signs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___N/A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___Email</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___Website</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___Print advertising</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___Radio advertising</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___Face-to-face communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___Other:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3.4.** Example of questions identifying effective channels of communication.
communicate information, to a ranking scale. The ranking scale was thought to provide more information on appropriate channels utilized by agribusinesses. Also, specific examples of social media were provided including Facebook and Twitter.

Reliability is the process of determining the consistency of an instrument in measuring the items at hand (Ary, et al., 2009). Reliability was analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha, which indicated a statistic of .7.

Data Collection Procedures

Dillman, Smyth, and Christian (2009) suggested that optimal response rate is achieved when using the five-contact system which includes a pre-notice letter, questionnaire mailing, a thank you postcard, a replacement questionnaire, and a final contact different from the questionnaires sent. The initial postcard (Appendix D), informing OABA members about the questionnaire they would be sent, was mailed in the beginning of January. Two weeks later, the instrument was mailed (also in January) and it was requested back by the last day of the month. On February 1, those who had not responded were mailed a reminder postcard (Appendix E). This postcard contained a link where they could access the same questionnaire online, if they had misplaced the hard copy of the instrument. An additional hard copy of the questionnaire was mailed to non-respondents on February 15 and requested back by March 1. A final follow-up postcard was sent on March 1 (Appendix F).

Data Analysis

Upon the conclusion of the study, the data was initially assessed through an Excel spreadsheet and then further analyzed using SPSS version 19. The data was analyzed by
calculating descriptive statistics such as frequency and mean. Qualitative measurements were evaluated through open-coding, which identified themes throughout the data.

Non-response error was calculated using a t-test, and analyzed differences between demographic information of early and late respondents, with the assumption that data from late respondents is similar to non-respondents (Miller & Smith, 1983). Since there was no observable difference, non-respondents were assumed to be the same as the last respondents.

Summary

This chapter sought to describe the methods used in this research study. This study included a mailed questionnaire that was returned at a rate of 40.5 (n=102) percent. The census study included a population of OABA members from across Ohio. Data for this study was analyzed using quantitative descriptive statistics as well as open-coding for qualitative data.
Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to explore how agribusinesses are communicating with, and marketing to their current and potential customers. The researchers sought to identify effective communication patterns used between all Ohio agribusinesses and relay their strategies to smaller agribusinesses, which often do not have time to dedicate to the area. The theories that guided this study were media richness theory and the uses and gratifications approach. The design of the study was a questionnaire that was mailed to members of the Ohio AgriBusiness Association (OABA). All members received a questionnaire, and the census study generated a response rate of 40.5 percent (N=102), out of the 240 OABA members. Descriptive statistics were calculated and are reported below. Additionally, open-coding was used to analyze qualitative portions of the study. This chapter will describe the findings of the study; first, demographic information will be discussed, followed by the objectives that were established in Chapter 1. These objectives included:

1. Identify who handles marketing and communication responsibilities in agribusinesses.
2. Establish the channels agribusinesses are using to communicate their messages.
3. Identify if agribusinesses use certain channels to communicate certain messages.
4. Describe what channels agribusinesses think that it is effective to communicate certain messages through.
Demographics

About the Respondents

In order to assess the research objectives completely, it is important to understand demographic information of the respondents. Demographic information that the researcher collected on the questionnaire included gender, level of education, position within the company they represent, and how many years they had worked with the company.

The respondents that filled out the survey were mostly male. Of the 94 participants who indicated their gender, 86.5 percent were male (N=83), and 13.5 percent were female (N=13). See table 1 for results.

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of education by marking check-boxes with options including some high school, high school, some college, associate's degree, bachelor's degree, and graduate degree. The most common level of education was a bachelor's degree (43.1 percent), followed by high school (16.7 percent), some college (14.7 percent), graduate degree (9.8 percent), and an associate's degree (8.8 percent). Seven of the participants did not respond to the question. See table 1 for these results.

Another demographic question that was asked was the respondent's position within the company. The most frequent response was that the participant was a manager within the company (34.3 percent). The same amount of people indicated that they were presidents and owners, both at 20.6 percent. The next most common response was vice president, at 6.9 percent. The remaining responses accounted for two percent and under,
for each category. See table 1 for details.

Respondents were also asked how long they had been employed by the company in an open-ended question. The range of years given was one to 45 years, (N=93) and the mean was 22.9 with a standard deviation of 13.3. The data was negatively skewed, indicating that many respondents had been employed less than the mean of 22.9 years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>86.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's Degree</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>46.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Degree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate's Degree</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some High School</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Account Executive</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspector</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Special Services</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing Coordinator</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1. Respondents indicated demographic information.

About the Agribusinesses

This study also looked at the sizes of the agribusinesses that chose to participate.

Four pieces of information were collected to describe the business' size: their perception
of how large they are, what OABA class they belong to (based on their gross income), the number of facilities that the business has, and how many people the business employs.

In order to gauge the respondent's perception of how large the business was, a likert-type scale was employed, using numbers one to seven, one indicating the smallest business, seven indicating the largest. Over 50 percent of the respondents (63.7 percent) said that they fell at level '3' and under. The most frequent response was a '1', at 23.1 percent. All levels were accounted for, and details can be seen in table 2, and the distribution can be seen in figure 6.

Figure 4.1. Respondents indicated their perception of the size of the business.
The OABA bases their membership levels on the business' gross income. Members who belong to Class A generate under $100 thousand, Class B makes $100,001 to $5 million, Class C generates between $5,000,001 and $10 million, Class D makes between $10,000,001 and $25 million, Class E generates $25,000,0001 to $50 million, and Class F generates over $50,000,001. Nearly half (46 %) of the respondents indicated that they were in Class B. The next most frequent answer was Class C at 17.2 percent, followed by Class A at 11.5 percent. Details for the remaining classes can be seen in table 2, and the distribution can be seen in figure 7.

Figure 4.2. Respondents indicated their level of OABA membership.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>( f )</th>
<th>( % )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perception</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Small</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Large</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OABA Class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class A $100,000 and under</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class B $100,001-$5 million</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>46.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class C $5,000,001-$10 million</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class D $10,000,001-$25 million</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class E $25,000,001-$50 million</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class F $50,000,001 and over</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2. Respondents indicated demographic information about the agribusiness.

Respondents were asked to indicate the number of facilities that belonged to the agribusiness that they represent. The mean number of facilities was 3.8, with a standard deviation of 6.5 (N=90) with a median and mode both equal to one. The minimum number of facilities indicated was one, and the maximum was 37. They were also asked how many people were employed by the business, and the results show a mean of 74.6 (N=88), with a standard deviation of 331.8. The minimum number of people employed was one and the maximum was 3,000, which was considered an outlier, and removed from the data. Another respondent indicated that 850 people were employed by their business, and this number was also considered an outlier. After removing the outliers from the data, the mean number of employees was 31.6 with a standard deviation of 55.2. The distribution can be found in figure 8 below, as well as table 3.
Figure 4.3. Distribution of the number of people employed by the businesses.

An additional piece of information gathered was the length of time the companies had been operating; the range of responses were from one to 160 (N=90) with a mean of 58.2 and standard deviation of 33.5. The distribution can be seen in figure 9 below.
Figure 4.4. Respondents indicated how many year the businesses have been operating.

A summary of demographic information including years of operation, number of facilities, and number of people employed can be found in table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S. D.</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years operating</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>58.2</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of facilities</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of people employed</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>55.2</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3. Respondents indicated demographic information about the agribusiness.
Objective 1

Identify who handles marketing and communication responsibilities in agribusinesses.

To gain a better understanding of who is responsible for marketing and communication work within small agribusiness, respondents were asked specifically who typically handles this kind of work in their business. Forty three percent of those who responded indicated that the owner is responsible, followed by a full time marketing professional at 22.5 percent. The third highest response rate was 'manager' at 19.6 percent. Manager was not a specific option given, but participants included it in the 'other' section. The forth most frequent response was anyone who gets to it, at 5.9 percent.

Additional responses in the 'other' portion included those in sales, marketing department, and shared responsibility. The remaining options were all below a 3 percent response rate, and can be seen on the table 4.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person responsible</th>
<th>$f$</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owner</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>43.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full time marketing professional</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anyone who gets to it</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We hire outside of the company</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales people</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part time employee</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing department</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared responsibilities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4. Respondents indicated who is responsible for marketing and communications in their business.

Training

Another question included on the questionnaire asked respondents to indicate the type of training the person that takes care of marketing and communication had. The most frequent response was that the person had a bachelor's degree, at 40.2 percent, followed by being self-taught at 34.3 percent. The frequency of workshop training was 19.6 percent, and the frequency of having a graduate degree was 6.9 percent. None of the participants responded that the person in question had no training. Results can be seen in table 5.
Table 4.5. Respondents indicated the level of training of the person responsible for marketing and communications in their business.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's degree</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>40.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-taught</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop training</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate degree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No training</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Agribusinesses and Marketing

Another portion of this objective examined respondents’ perception of their business' marketing plan; questions included how important marketing was to businesses, if a marketing plan is in place, if the marketing strategy in place was effective or not and the percentage of annual income spent on marketing.

To gather data on the importance of marketing and communication for each business, a likert-type scale of one to seven was used, one being not important, and seven being very important. Respondents were also asked to justify their answer in an open-ended format directly following the initial question. The mean of the responses was 5.2 (N=90) with a standard deviation of 1.4.

Participants indicated that 47.8 percent of agribusinesses have a marketing plan in place. A likert-type scale was used to gather data on perceptions of if the businesses' marketing plans were effective. A response of one indicated that the plan was not effective, and seven indicated a highly effective plan. Responses showed a mean of 4.0 (N=92) with a standard deviation of 1.5. When asked to justify their answer, in an open-
ended format, many respondents indicated that they did not have a marketing strategy in place (N=7), and that they could improve (N=9). A couple of businesses said that their business is growing (N=2), and that they do not have enough time to dedicate to marketing (N=2). A comment was also made that no one is appointed to the position.

When asked what percentage of the business’ income is dedicated to a marketing and communications budget, over 73 percent indicated that they allocate 5 percent or less. Details can be seen in table 6 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of annual income</th>
<th>( f )</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1%</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>31.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5%</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>41.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 25%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't know</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.6. Respondents indicated annual income spent on marketing.

Objective 2

Identify the channels agribusinesses are using to communicate their messages.

Objective two aimed to see how often small agribusinesses use specific channels of communication, including: the postal service, company websites, social media, in-store flyers, printed publications, online advertising, radio advertising, and road signs and billboards. Respondents were given check-box options consisting of never, yearly, monthly, weekly, and daily.
Respondents indicated that they do not use all of the types of media included on the questionnaire. Table 7 below shows how many businesses use each type of media, regardless of the frequency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Postal service</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>94.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printed publications</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>85.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>61.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-store flyers</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>53.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>49.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billboards and roadsigns</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online advertising</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7. Respondents indicated what media they use.

According to the results, the postal service is used most frequently and by most respondents. Over 94 percent of respondents indicated that they use this channel. The table below shows the frequencies that were indicated among agribusiness in their use of the postal service.
Table 4.8. Respondents indicated how often they use the postal service.

The next channel that is most used by Ohio agribusinesses is advertising in printed publications such as magazines and newspapers; over 85 percent of the respondents that answered this question use this channel. None of the respondents indicated that they use this channel daily, but over 46 percent said that they use this method monthly, while 13.7 percent of respondents indicated that they never use this channel. Details are included in table 9 below.

Table 4.9. Respondents indicated how often they advertise in printed publications.
The next channel that is used most frequently is company websites, and 61.5 percent of participants update the company website. Of those agribusinesses that update websites, 13.7 percent update them daily. The results indicate that 18.6 percent of participants update the company website monthly, while over 34 percent of respondents never update, or do not have a website. Details are included in table 10 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency in website use</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yearly</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.10. Respondents indicated frequency in their website use.

Of the 53.3 percent of respondents that indicated that their business uses in-store flyers, fewer than 6 percent of agribusinesses use them on a daily basis. Most respondents, 21.6 percent, use this channel monthly, while 41.6 percent of respondents said that they never use in-store flyers. Details can be seen in table 11 below.
Frequency in use of in-store flyers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency in use</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>41.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yearly</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.11. Respondents indicated how often they use in-store flyers.

Less than 50 percent advertise on the radio, and only 29.4 percent use this channel on a yearly basis. The monthly, weekly, and daily frequency categories all had under 7 percent use. Details can be seen in table 12 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of radio use</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>47.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yearly</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.12. Respondents indicated how often they advertise on the radio.

A majority of Ohio agribusinesses do not use billboards and road signs as a channel of communication (21.3% do use billboards and road signs); over 72 percent indicated that they never use this method. Those respondents, who said that they utilize billboards, mainly responded that it was a yearly event (10.8 percent). Details can be seen in table 13 below.
Frequency of billboard/road sign use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of use</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>72.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yearly</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.13. Respondents indicated how often they use road signs and billboards.

Social media is not widely used as a channel of communication among respondents. A quarter (25%) of the respondents use social media, in general; there are a few businesses that use social media daily (6.9 percent), but for the most part it is not utilized by Ohio agribusinesses. Details for social media use can be seen in table 14 below.

Frequency of social media use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of use</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>67.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yearly</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.14. Respondents indicate how often they use social media.

Online advertising is also not frequently used among the respondents; only 21 percent of the participants use online advertising. Of those who do, 10 percent indicated
that they advertise monthly. The table below outlines the details of the use of online advertising.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of online advertising use</th>
<th>$f$</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>74.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yearly</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.15. Respondents indicated their use of online advertising.

Objective 3

Identify what channels agribusinesses use to communicate messages.

To collect data on the messages agribusinesses communicate through different channels, a two part question was employed; the first part specified a medium, and asked respondents to indicate what messages they communicate through the given medium. Check boxes were provided with messages including new product information, general store information, government legislation information, product advertisements, discount and promotion information, we don't use this channel, and an other option box. The second part included an open-ended question where respondents could fill in 'other' information that they communicate to customers through the channel in question. Channels included the postal service, business website, social media, in-store flyers, printed publications, online advertising, radio advertising, and billboards and road signs.
Postal Service

When looking at what messages businesses communicate through the postal service, 33 percent (n=30) indicated that they use it for product advertisements, followed by new product information (30.8 percent). The next most frequent answer was that it was used for general store information (25.3 percent). Over 57 percent of respondents indicated that they use the postal service for something other than the options given. Of the 57.8 percent that chose the 'other' option, 28.4 percent responded that they use it for billing purposes, 4.9 percent indicated they use it for grain contracts, 2.9 percent said they use it if for newsletters, and 2.0 percent said they use it for meetings. This response was collected from the open-ended portion of the question. See table 16 for details.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Postal Service Use</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>57.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product advertisements</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New product information</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General store information</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discount/promotional information</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government legislation information</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't use the postal service</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.16. Respondents indicated what they use the postal service for.
*Percentages do not total 100 because multiple answers were accepted.

Business Website

Of those businesses that update their websites, 47 percent (N=39) post new product information, 45 percent (n=38) post general store information, 34.9 percent (N=29) post product advertisements, 24.1 percent (N=20) update discount and promotion information, and 3.6 percent (N=3) post government legislation information. Over 26 percent (N=20) of respondents do not have, or do not use a company website. Of the
23.2 percent of participants that marked the other box, 10.8 percent indicated that they use their website to update grain prices. Details are in table 17.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website Use</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New product information</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>47.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General store information</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>45.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product advertisements</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>34.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't use a website</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discount/promotion information</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government legislation information</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.17. Respondents indicated what they use the business’ website for.
*Percentages do not total 100 because multiple answers were accepted.

Social Media

Only 51 participants completed this question, and of the 51, 52.9 percent do not use social media as a form of communication (N=27). Of those who do use this channel, 31.4 percent (N=16) use it for product advertisements, 28.3 percent (N=15) use it to communicate new product information, 23.5 percent (N=12) use it for general store information, 9.8 percent (N=5) use it for discount and promotional information, and 3.9 percent (N=2) use it for government legislation information. A summary can be found on table 18 below.
Social Media Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do not use social media</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>52.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product advertisements</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>31.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New product information</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General store information</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discount/promotional info</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government legislation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.18. Respondents indicated what they use social media for. *Percentages do not total 100 because multiple answers were accepted.

In-Store Flyers

Of those businesses that use in-store flyers to communicate, 48.1 percent (N=37) use them for new product information, 41.6 percent (N=32) use them for product advertisements, 31.2 percent (N=24) use them for discount and promotional information, 22.1 percent (N=17) use them for general store information, and 7.9 percent (N=6) use them to communicate government legislation information. Over 34 percent (N=26) of respondents do not use in-store flyers as a form of communication. Details can be seen on table 19 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In-Store Flyer Use</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New product information</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>48.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product advertisements</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>41.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not use in-store flyers</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>34.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discount/promotion information</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>31.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General store information</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government legislation information</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.19. Respondents indicated what they use in-store flyers for. *Percentages do not total 100 because multiple answers were accepted.
Printed Publications

Of those who advertise in printed publications, 60.6 percent (N=57) advertise general products, 34 percent (N=32) advertise general store information, 30.9 percent (N=29) advertise new products, 24.5 percent (N=23) communicated discount and promotion information, and 8.5 percent (N=8) indicated that they do not advertise in printed publications. Details of this data can be found in table 20 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Printed Publication Use</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Product advertisements</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>60.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General store information</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>34.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New product information</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discount/promotion information</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not use printed publications</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.20. Respondents indicated how they advertise in printed publications.
*Percentages do not total 100 because respondents were allowed to check multiple options.

Online Advertising

Only around 50 people responded to this question, and of those 50, 65.4 percent (N=34) indicated that the businesses they represent do not advertise online. Of those who do advertise online, 23.1 percent (N=12) said that they use product advertisements, 19.2 percent (N=10) indicated they advertise new products, 17.3 percent (N=9) said that they communicate discount and promotional information, and 13.5 percent (N=7) said that they use it for general store information. Details from the online advertising data are in table 21 below.
Online Advertising Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do not advertise online</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>65.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product advertisements</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New product information</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discount/promotion information</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General store information</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.21. Respondents indicated how they advertise online.
*Percentages do not total 100 because respondents were allowed to check multiple options.

Radio Use

Out of those agribusinesses that use the radio to communicate, 40.6 percent (N=26) indicated that they advertise general store information, 25 percent (N=16) use general product advertisements, 23.4 percent (N=15) advertise new products, and 18.8 percent (N=12) advertise discount and promotional information. Over 21 percent (N=20) responded that they do not communicate through the radio. Over 12 percent (N=8) marked the ‘other’ box, and of those responses, 2.9 percent (N=3) indicated that they use the radio to communicate grain prices. Details for agribusinesses’ use of the radio can be found in table 22.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Radio Use</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General store information</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>40.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t use the radio</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product advertisements</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New product information</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discount/promotion information</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.22. Respondents indicated how they use the radio.
*Percentages do not total 100 because respondents were allowed to check multiple options.
Billboards and Road Signs

A majority of agribusinesses (54.3 percent) that responded do not utilize billboards and road signs as a channel of communication. Of those who do use this channel, 28.3 percent (N=13) use it for general product advertisements, 21.7 percent (N=10) use it for general store information, 4.3 percent (N=2) use it for new product information, and 2.2 percent (N=1) use it to inform people about promotion and discount information. Over 15 percent marked the 'other' box (N=7), and 2.9 percent indicated that they use seed signs. A summary of agribusiness' use of billboards and road signs is in table 23 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Billboards &amp; Road Sign Use</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don't use billboards or road signs</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>54.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product advertisements</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General store information</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New product information</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discount/promotion information</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.23. Respondents indicated how they use billboards and road signs.
*Percentages do not total 100 because respondents were allowed to check multiple check boxes.

Objective 4

Describe what channels agribusinesses think that it is effective to communicate certain messages through.

To evaluate what Ohio agribusinesses thought was the most effective manner to communicate certain messages to consumers, they were asked to rate the most efficient method on a scale of one to 10 (one being the most effective, 10 being the least).
Respondents had the opportunity to fill in an 'other' option, and were also asked why they ranked the channels in the manner that they did.

**Advertising Products**

When asked what the most effective channel to advertise products was, face-to-face had the lowest mean, which was 1.8 (N=86), indicating that agribusinesses regard it as effective. The next lowest mean was print advertising, with a mean of 3.7 (N=69). The company website, email, and the postal service all had means less than 5.0. The channel with the highest mean was billboards and road signs (N=49).

Participants had the opportunity to fill in 'other' channels that they considered effective in advertising products, and this category had a mean of 1.9 (N=11). Responses included word of mouth (N=6), phone (N=3), and trade shows (N=2), all of which can be considered face-to-face communication. There were a variety of responses when asked why they ranked the channels in the particular order. Many people commented on face-to-face interactions, and indicated that it was the best way to build customer relationships. A few respondents thought that face-to-face was effective, but time consuming. Details are in table 24 below.
When asked what the most efficient channel was to communicate new product information, face-to-face had a mean of 2.0 (N=84), followed by print advertising with 3.9 (N=66), and then the company website at 4.2 (N=56), email with a mean of 4.4 (N=58), the postal service had a mean of 4.65 (N=63), in store flyers came in at 5.2 (N=61), radio had a mean of 6.1 (N=55), online ads were at 6.92 (N=51), and social media and billboards had a mean of over 7.

The 'other' values had a mean of 1.6 (N=7), and responses included word of mouth (N=2), and fax (N=2). When asked why respondents rated their answers the way they did, there was a wide range of responses. A few participants indicated that face-to-face is most effective, but costly. Another respondent commented that it depends on what audience they were trying to reach. Additionally, a couple participants wrote that farmers read more magazines than online advertisements. Details are in table 4 below.
Table 4.25. Respondents indicated the most effective channel to communicate new product information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S. D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print advertising</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postal service</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In store flyers</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online ads</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billboards and road signs</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

General Store Information

According to the results, face-to-face (mean=2.6) is the most efficient way to communicate general store information, followed by print advertising (mean=3.6), company websites (mean=3.7), email and the postal service (mean tied at 4.6), in store flyers (mean=4.9), the radio (mean=6.0), social media (mean=6.9), online ads (mean=7.5), and finally billboards and road signs (mean=7.5). Details can be found in table 24 below.

The 'other' value came in at a mean of 2.0 (N=2), and word of mouth was listed as a channel. When asked why respondents indicated certain ratings, one of the answers was that customers are getting used to checking general store information on the internet before going into the store. Another replied that trade magazines are common to the industry. Details are in table 26 below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S. D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print advertising</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postal service</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In store flyers</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online ads</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billboards and road signs</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.26. Respondents indicate the most effective channel to communicate general store information.

Discount and Promotional Information

Respondents indicated that face-to-face communication is the most effective way of communicating discount and promotional information (mean=2.1), followed by email (mean=3.8), company website (mean=4.0), print advertising (mean=4.1), postal service (mean=4.6), in store flyers (mean=4.9), online ads (mean=7.3), social media (mean=7.4), and last was billboards and road signs (mean=8.2). Nine respondents indicated that they do not communicate discount and promotional information by marking the not applicable section. In the 'other' portion, two respondents indicated that they use a fax machine to deliver discount and promotional information. Details are in table 27 below.
Table 4.27: Respondents indicated the most effective channel to communicate discount and promotional information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S. D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postal service</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In store flyers</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online ads</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billboards</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Educational Information

As the respondents indicated, face-to-face was the best way to relay educational information (mean=2.4), followed by email (mean=3.4), company website (mean=3.5), print advertising (mean=3.8), the postal service (mean=4.5), in store flyers (mean=4.8), the radio (mean=6.5), social media (mean=6.9), online ads (mean=7.5), and billboards and road signs (mean=8.6). Eight respondents indicated that they do not communicate educational information, and four said that they use an 'other' method. Two of the four responded that they use a fax machine, and two indicated that they use meetings to communicated educational information. When asked why, a couple of participants said that it depends on who the audience is. Details are in table 28 below.
Government Legislation Information

Agribusinesses indicated that effectively communicating government legislation information is a bit different than the other kinds of messages; email had the lowest mean (mean=2.5), followed by face-to-face (mean=3.4), website (mean=3.6), print advertisement (mean=4.0), in store flyers (mean=5.2), radio (mean=6.0), social media (mean=7.1), online advertising (mean=7.3), and billboards and road signs (mean=8.6). Nineteen respondents indicated that they do not communicate government legislation information. When asked why, many respondents indicated that they prefer not to take political positions. Details are in table 29 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S. D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postal service</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In store flyers</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online ads</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billboards</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.28. Respondents indicated the most effective channel to communicate educational information.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S. D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postal service</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In store flyers</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online ads</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billboards</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.29. Respondents indicated the most effective channel for communicating governmental legislation information.

Summary

In this chapter, descriptive statistics have identified the demographics of the individuals who filled out the mailed questionnaire. The instrument was also used to gather data on who usually is responsible for the marketing and communication in agribusinesses, what channels they use to relay information, and what information they communicate to customers. Additionally, the questionnaire measured what the participants believed the most effective methods of communication were.

Many participants indicated that the owners are mostly responsible for the communications and marketing within Ohio agribusinesses, and their training usually is a bachelor's degree. The most frequently used channel of communication used among the target audience was the postal service, which respondents indicated they typically use this method once a month. Many respondents said that they use the postal service to mail monthly bills. In communicating most kinds of information, respondents indicated that face-to-face is the most effective method.
Chapter 5: Summary, Discussion & Conclusions

Summary

Currently we encounter over 3,000 messages daily through a plethora of channels of communication (Brock & Green, 2005). With endless methods of exchanging information, it is important for businesses to harness the most effective method to reach their target audience. It is important for every industry to cater to their specific consumer base to save time and money, and the agricultural field is not any different. The researchers of this study chose to focus on the business perspective of the communications process, specifically Ohio agribusinesses.

The purpose of this study was to explore how Ohio agribusinesses are communicating with, and marketing to their current and potential customers. The researchers sought to identify effective communication patterns used between all Ohio agribusinesses to gauge efficient strategies, and relay their practices to smaller agribusinesses that often do not have time to dedicate to the area. The theoretical framework that was used to shape this study included media richness theory and the uses and gratifications approach. Using the theories as a guide, a questionnaire was created and mailed to OABA members (N=102), and 102 Ohio agribusinesses returned them. Specifically, the questionnaire sought to gather information from participants about what channels agribusinesses were using to communicate, what information is relayed through...
the channels, and what the most effective channels are to express information, from the business perspective.

The data collected in this research cannot be generalized beyond those who participated in the mailed administered questionnaire. While this information is not generalizable beyond this population, its insights and results shed light onto important information for communicators.

Conclusions

Demographics

The demographic portion of the study found that over 85 percent of those that completed the questionnaire were male, and that their position in the company was a manager (34.3%), owner (20.6%) or president (20.6%).

According to the results, 46.3 percent of respondents had earned a bachelor’s degree, and 17.9 percent had their high school diploma. These percentages correspond with the 2007 U.S. Census Bureau’s Survey of Business Owners that found that 20.6 percent of the owners had their high school diploma, and 26.4 percent had obtained a bachelor’s degree. In regards to the number of years employed by the respective companies, there was a range from one to 45, with a mean of 22.9 years. The data was negatively skewed, indicating that many participants had been at their place of employment for less than the mean of 22.9 years. Participants with less years of employment within their respective companies may not have complete knowledge of the inner workings of the businesses. People with more experience in their companies may have responded to questions on the instrument differently.
The businesses that participated in the study had been operating for a mean of 58.2 years, and had an average of 3.8 branch facilities.

In regards to the perception of business’ size, over 45 percent of respondents ranked their business as a ‘2’ or lower on a likert scale of one to seven (one being the smallest, seven being the largest). The most frequent OABA Class membership was ‘B’, indicating that the companies generated a gross income of under $5 million. Class ‘A’ (businesses making under $100,000 annually) had a frequency of 11.5 percent, indicating that 57.5 percent of OABA members generate less than $5 million. Participants responded that the average number of people employed by their business was 74.6. The Small Business Administration (2011) classifies small businesses by having less than 500 employees or less than $7 million in annual income. By these parameters, over half of the participants can be considered to be small businesses.

It is important to note that small businesses have a different outlook on communication practices when compared to large corporations. Often times, corporations have a larger budget to dedicate to marketing. They also have a larger staff that can spend time planning how to allocate communication dollars. These businesses are able to use their resources to find the right mix of marketing variables. Small businesses, with smaller budgets, are forced to be more conservative in their communication endeavors, and need to be careful not to spend their money unwisely.
Objective 1

Identify who handles marketing and communication responsibilities in agribusinesses.

Most employees communicate within businesses, but there are typically a select few that are responsible for implementing marketing plans, and exchanging information with those outside of the business. Of the agribusinesses that participated in this study, 43 percent of the businesses rely on the owners to execute marketing and communication processes. Less than a quarter of the respondents (22.5%) indicated that they employ a full time marketing professional, and 19.6 percent of businesses assign the duties to a manager. The most frequent response as far as these individuals training in the area was a bachelor's degree (40.2%), followed by being self-taught (34.3%).

It is not surprising to find that much of the communications work is done by someone other than a full time professional, since many of the businesses that participated were considered to be small by the Small Business Administration standards. Small businesses typically appear in more rural areas, with less employees. The marketing responsibilities have to be distributed among workers, as opposed to a full time professional. It also makes sense that those who carry the marketing workload within the businesses are self-taught, since smaller staffs often have a multitude of responsibilities, and cannot be trained in every area that they work.

Less than half (47.8%) of the respondents indicated that they have a marketing plan in place. Businesses were asked to rank the effectiveness of their marketing strategies on a likert scale of one to seven, one being not effective, and seven being very
effective; the mean response for this question was a 4. The most frequent responses given included that the businesses did not have a marketing plan in place, that their practices could be improved, they do not have enough time to dedicate to marketing, and they do not employ a marketing professional.

It is interesting that so few of Ohio's agribusinesses have a marketing plan in place, but have been operating for over 50 years, on average. This finding negates Lussier's suggestion that businesses fail because of a lack of marketing (Lussier, 2010). The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2005) indicates on their website that business-savvy agriculturalists are devoting more time to developing marketing strategies to ensure the success of their enterprise; in a way, the findings of this study contradict this statement. It seems as though many agribusinesses have been surviving without dedicating time to generating a marketing plan. Several of the respondents indicated that marketing is important to their business (mean of 5.2 on a scale of one to seven). Even though many do not have a formal marketing plan, they still recognize the value in communication and marketing.

Another conclusion that could be drawn is that respondents did not fully understand what the term 'marketing' refers to, and everything that it encompasses. As stated previously, many of the people responsible for marketing indicated that they were self taught, and may not be aware of how much of their every day operations is centered on the communications field. One example within this study was seen in the open-ended portion of objective 4. Respondents were permitted to indicate effective methods of communication that were not given as options originally; some responses included word
of mouth, trade shows, and telephone, all of which can be considered face-to-face communication.

**Objective 2**

Identify the channels small agribusinesses are using to communicate their messages.

From the post office, to websites, to face-to-face, there are a multitude of ways for agribusinesses to communicate information to their customers. Common channels of communication that this study focused on were the postal service, printed publication advertising, company websites, in-store flyers, radio, billboards and road signs, social media, and online advertising.

Over 94 percent of respondents indicated that their business uses the postal service, and most of the participants use it monthly (42.2%). This finding is not congruent with the overall trend that the U.S. Postal Service is being utilized less; according to the U.S. Government Accountability Office (2012), the shift to electronic options has caused the mail volume to substantially decline, and has created economic problems for the U.S. Postal Service. If the postal service does not resolve their financial crisis, it is potentially at risk of closing. Without the option of using this service, Ohio agribusinesses will be forced to find alternative channels to communicate through.

The next most frequently used channel of communication was advertising through printed publications, such as magazines and newspapers. Over 85 percent of the respondents indicated that they use this method to reach their customers, and 46.1 percent said that they use it on a monthly basis. This finding indicates that businesses are
advertising in monthly publications as opposed to daily newspapers. Many of the Ohio agricultural publications are printed monthly, so it is likely that respondents are advertising in agricultural based magazines and newspapers. According to Moozakis (2011), businesses still prefer advertising in printed newspapers because they are seen as more credible and more comfortable to read than their online counterparts. This would explain why 76 percent of the respondents indicated that they never advertise online.

Although the number of company websites in the U.S. increases daily, it is not a prevalent method of communication in Ohio agribusinesses. Less than 65 percent of participants indicated that they use company websites; 34.3 percent said that they never use it. Those who do use websites responded that they update it monthly. Hooker, et. al. (2001) suggested that even though there are a vast array of opportunities with business websites, participants in the agricultural sector are often resistant to change and are not as familiar with information technology as other industries are. Agribusinesses may also be hesitant to go online because it takes time, thought and money (Palmer & Steed, 2011). Since small agribusinesses often have less employees, and are self-taught, they likely do not have anyone on staff that has knowledge of creating or maintaining a website. They do have the option of hiring an external entity, but this tends to be more costly than internal web development.

According to the study's findings, few agribusinesses use in-store flyers; over 41 percent of respondents indicated that they never use them, and 17.6 percent said that they use them yearly. The results for radio were similar; less than 50 percent of the participants use the radio to communicate, and of those that do, 29.4 percent use it yearly.
Advertising on the radio can be costly, which would account for only using this medium yearly. It is interesting that respondents reported such little utilization of the radio, since it was such a popular medium to disseminate information in the early and mid 20th century (Boone, Meisenbach & Tucker, 2000).

Billboards and road signs were also barely used; 72 percent indicated that they do not use this channel to advertise. According to IBIS World's Marketing Report (2011), the billboard industry has faced a decline in profit. The report mentions that this form of advertising is capital intensive because of the high cost of billboard construction and maintenance. The high costs associated with communicating through this channel are probably what discourages agribusinesses from using it.

Social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, is a newer innovation that is not widely used by respondents. Over 67 percent of the participants indicated that they never use this medium. Of the 25 percent that do use social media, 6.9 percent use it daily. It is not surprising that this method of communication hasn't caught on in agribusinesses. An eMarketer Report found that only 12 percent of small businesses consider social media an effective way to communicate with their customers. The report conveyed that word-of-mouth was the most important marketing tool in a majority of businesses. It is possible that the participants that were responsible for filling out the questionnaire were not aware of company use of social media, or that they have social media accounts but do not use them. There are many levels of social media involvement, and it would be prudent of agribusinesses to take advantage of the low cost and wide reach that this channel offers.
Objective 3

Identify what channels agribusinesses use to communicate messages.

The instrument used in this study classified the uses for each channel into categories including new product information, general store information, product advertisements, discount and promotional information and government legislation information. The purpose of this objective was to identify if agribusinesses tended to convey certain messages through each channel.

As stated in the literature review, people seek to fulfill different needs and gratifications in the media they use. The uses and gratifications approach was used as a guide for this study and can be used as a lens to examine this study's findings. McQuail (2000) wrote that there are four general motives for media exposure including diversion from routine and emotional release, the need for companionship (social aspect), personal identity including self-reference, reality exploration and value reinforcement and also surveillance as a form of information seeking.

The findings of the study suggest that agribusinesses tend to communicate general store information, new product information, and general product advertisements, regardless of what channel they are using. The respondents indicated that they generally do not communicate government legislation information or discount and promotional
information. Ohio agribusinesses mostly appeal to the surveillance use that McQuail outlined, and do little to account for diversion, companionship, and personal identity.

Uses and gratifications approach in regards to the internet is a popular field of research. Korgaonkar and Wolin (1999) identified seven factors that motivate people to use the internet: (1) social escapism, (2) transactional security and privacy, (3) information, (4) interactive control, (5) socialization, (6) nontransactional privacy, and (7) economic motivation.

This study found that 47 percent of respondents use their company website to communicate new product information, and 45 percent use it for general store information. Both of these messages would fall under Korgaonkar and Wolin’s ‘information’ category. According to Palmer & Steed (2011) 81 percent of people on the Internet research products and services before buying them. One of the participants noted in an open-ended question that people look at company websites before going into the store, which would account for the general store information.

The postal service and printed publications are mostly used for general product advertisements. Both of these methods are more traditional forms of communication. Online advertising and billboards and road signs are rarely used by respondents, regardless of the message.
Objective 4

Describe what channels agribusinesses think that it is effective to communicate certain messages through.

Findings regarding the most effective methods of communication are mostly consistent with the theory of media richness. As outlined in the literature review, media richness theory is founded on four criteria, including feedback, which allows miscommunications to be corrected and for questions to be asked; multiple cues, which refers to the messages that can be made of many different cues such as body language, voice inflection, words used, etcetera; language variety, which is the range of meaning that can be conveyed with language symbols (Daft et. al., 1987); and a personal focus, where a message can have more meaning when emotions and feelings are attached (Daft et. al., 1987). From the criteria came a hierarchy of media. According to Daft and Lengel (1983) face-to-face interaction is the richest form because of the ability to provide instant feedback, followed by telephone, written communication, and numeric documents.

Face-to-face communication was the method that was ranked as the most effective for all types of information that were presented, excluding government legislation information. This is likely because the ability to provide instant feedback, multiple cues, language variety, and a personal focus, as outlined by Daft, Lengel, and Trevino.
Print advertising was usually ranked the second most effective method of communication among all types of information. According to Duft (2011) agribusiness retailers do not allocate as much money to this type of communication because they operate within a smaller market with more select clientele, and are less dependent on advertising to maintain a competitive position in their market (Duft, 2011). This means that even if the businesses do not dedicate much of their income to print advertising, they still think that it can be an effective form of communication. This is also interesting because of the inability of the medium to give feedback, cues, or language variety. Some advertisements in printed publications do have the ability to be personal; communicators can use specific trade or consumer magazines and newspapers, and gear their messages to certain people that are part of the publications' target audience.

Websites were ranked third for advertising products, conveying new product information, general store information, discounts and promotional information, and educational information. Since over 25 percent of the agribusiness respondents did not have websites, this indicates that they understand the value of a company website, even if they do not have one.

Email communication was ranked the second most effective method of communication for messages relaying discount and promotional information, as well as educational information. Emails don't allow for multiple cues, language variety, or instant feedback, but it is an inexpensive and quick way to communicate with audiences.

Government legislation was the only type of message that respondents thought email would be the most effective. In one of the open-ended questions, participants
indicated that they did not want to be affiliated with politics. It is also possible that agribusinesses rely on commodity groups and farm bureau organizations to disperse this kind of information through email.

Recommendations for researchers

It is recommended that the mailed questionnaire be replicated among agribusinesses that are not members of the Ohio AgriBusiness Association to increase the validity of the instrument. Further replication should also include agribusiness outside of Ohio to compare results. Also, a questionnaire that is directly administered at an agribusiness event may lead to a higher response rate compared to the mailed instrument.

Additional research studies should also be conducted to expand the findings of this study. Researchers should look more specifically at what kind of agricultural businesses they are studying and who their target audiences are. The nature of diversity of agribusinesses may lead to the need for a more qualitative based study using case studies and interviews.

It would also be useful to examine technology adoption among agribusinesses. The findings indicate that agribusinesses prefer to use more traditional forms of media, and it would be beneficial to examine the factors that lead to adoption or hinder it among the target population.

Researchers should look at the agribusiness customer population to identify communication patterns. Future studies should incorporate more questions specifically tied to the uses and gratifications approach and media richness theory, from a consumer
perspective. The studies should focus on how customers prefer to receive information, and what kind of information they seek from agribusinesses.

Recommendations for practitioners

According to this study's findings, agribusinesses prefer using traditional forms of media, but still understand the effectiveness of the ability to go online to communicate. One of the obstacles they may face is not knowing how to integrate new technologies into their every day operations. Agricultural communicators should continue the use of online media, and disseminate information on use and processes of using the media to agribusinesses. It may be beneficial to transition agribusinesses into the digital age by providing information through traditional and digital means, including print and electronic formats.

Monitoring agribusiness' online presence would also be beneficial. With consumers turning to the internet as a primary source of information, it is going to be important to understand how agribusinesses compare with other businesses and the general public in regards to how they use online media.

Implications for OABA

The results indicate that it would be beneficial for the OABA to provide workshops to increase member knowledge of the marketing and communication field. The programs could focus on newer media to make agribusiness leaders aware of advancements in the digital world. OABA members may not have an immediate need to integrate social media or online advertisements into their business if their target audience
does not use these types of channels to communicate, but it is still imperative that they are aware of their options as the world transitions to more of a digital marketplace.

In order to generate interest in this sort of workshop, the OABA staff would have to effectively market the benefits of the program. Multiple channels should be used to relay the information. They could make use of email for those who are comfortable in using it; for the more traditional agribusinesses, a hard copy newsletter, phone call, or face-to-face meeting could create interest. There seems to be a continuum of agribusinesses' media use; some are not familiar at all with new media, some may be fairly adept, and a few may be experts. It is important to account for everyone on the continuum. Providing opportunities to increase mid-continuum businesses' technological tool kit would be beneficial outside of a workshop. Examples could include providing links to videos on YouTube, or social media fan pages.

The message contained within the media is also very important. According to the results of this study, agribusinesses are aware of constraints on time and money. Promoting the workshop as a way for agribusinesses to market to customers using less time and money could potentially draw their interest. Depending on the venue and amount of staffing of a marketing program, it may be effective to help businesses start social media pages (for those who don't have them), or show places where agribusinesses could advertise online.

Summary

Specific conclusions pertaining to each research objective have been discussed in this chapter. It has been determined that many of the marketing and communications
responsibilities falls to agribusiness owners, who typically aren't trained in the field. The postal service is the most frequently used method of communication, and respondents believe that face-to-face communication is the most effective. Ohio agribusinesses tend to use traditional media, and have yet to fully integrate the use of company websites, social media, and online advertising.

Agricultural communicators need to focus on helping agribusinesses to transition into the digital age. Although it is important to keep traditional methods of communication in mind, businesses could benefit from the opportunities that online media bring.
References


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Appendices
Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Approval Document
December 5, 2011

Protocol Number: 2011E0073
Protocol Title: INTEGRATED COMMUNICATION MARKETING STRATEGIES IN OHIO AGRIBUSINESS, EMILY KOEDENES, STACY JEWELL, HUMAN & COMM DEV
Type of Review: Request for Exempt Determination

Dear Dr. Koedenes,

The Office of Responsible Research Practices has determined the above referenced protocol exempt from IRB review.

Date of Exempt Determination: 11/29/2011
Qualifying Exemption Category: 2

Please note the following:

- Only OSU employees and students who have completed CITI training and are named on the signature page of the application are approved as OSU investigators in conducting this study.
- No changes may be made to exempt research (e.g., personnel, recruitment procedures, advertisements, instruments, etc.). If changes are made, a new application must be submitted.
- Per university requirements, all research-related records (including signed consent forms) must be retained and available for audit for a period of at least three years after the research has ended.
- It is the responsibility of the Investigator to promptly report events that may represent unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

This determination is issued under The Ohio State University’s OHRP Federally-Assured #00006378. All forms and procedures can be found on the OHRP website – www.ohio.edu. Please feel free to contact the OHRP staff contact listed below with any questions or concerns.

Cheri Petry, MA, Certified IRB Professional
Senior Protocol Analyst—Exempt Research

Office of Responsible Research Practices
Ohio State University
1960 Kenny Road
Columbus, OH 43210
phone: 614.688.0389
fax: 614.688.0366
email: research@ohio.edu

Exempt Determination
Version 1.2
Appendix B: Mailed Questionnaire
Dear Ohio Agribusiness:

We are conducting a study to understand how Ohio agribusinesses are currently communicating and marketing to their current and potential customers. Specifically, the research examines integrated marketing communication strategies. As an Ohio agribusiness leader you have insight into how your organization communicates and markets to your target audience. Since every business is different, we request that you share this information by taking 10 to 15 minutes to fill out the following questionnaire.

Your participation is completely voluntary. Furthermore, you are free to withdraw consent at any time and to discontinue participation without prejudice. All answers are confidential to the extent provided by law. There are no known risks associated with this study. By filling out this questionnaire and mailing it back you consent to participate in the study.

Upon return of this questionnaire you will be entered into a drawing for a **$250 gift card to Best Buy**, which has been provided by the OABA.

Please return the questionnaire and the additional OABA page by **March 1, 2012**.

The results from this survey will be used for a graduate thesis at The Ohio State University which is being conducted by a graduate student and faculty advisor. The data will be recorded and analyzed, and then will be examined at a thesis presentation. If you do not feel comfortable answering a question, skip it. We thank you for taking your time to complete this survey. Your contribution to this study is very important.

If you have any questions about this research please contact me, the principal researcher, Stacy Jewell at jewell.71@osu.edu or my advisor, Dr. Emily Rhoades at rhoades.100@osu.edu.

For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1800-678-6251.

Thank you in advance,

Sincerely,

Stacy Jewell & Emily Rhoades, PhD
The Ohio State University
1. How often does your business use the postal service to communicate with your customers?
   - Never  ☐ Yearly  ☑ Monthly  ☐ Weekly  ☐ Daily

b. What do you used the postal service for? (Check all that apply)
   - ☐ New product information  ☐ General store information  ☐ Government legislation information
   - ☐ Product advertisements  ☐ Discount/promotion information
   - ☐ We don’t use the postal service
   - ☐ Other: ____________________________________________

2. How often does your business update your website?
   - Never  ☐ Yearly  ☐ Monthly  ☐ Weekly  ☐ Daily

b. What does your business use your website for? (Check all that apply)
   - ☐ New product information  ☐ General store information  ☐ Government legislation information
   - ☐ Product advertisements  ☐ Discount/promotion information
   - ☐ We don’t have a website
   - ☐ Other: ____________________________________________

3. How often does your business use social media (such as Facebook, or Twitter)?
   - Never  ☐ Yearly  ☐ Monthly  ☐ Weekly  ☐ Daily

b. What does your business use social media for? (Check all that apply)
   - ☐ New product information  ☐ General store information  ☐ Government legislation information
   - ☐ Product advertisements  ☐ Discount/promotion information
   - ☐ We don’t use social media
   - ☐ Other: ____________________________________________

4. How often does your business use in-store flyers?
   - Never  ☐ Yearly  ☐ Monthly  ☐ Weekly  ☐ Daily

b. What does your business use in-store flyers for? (Check all that apply)
   - ☐ New product information  ☐ General store information  ☐ Government legislation information
   - ☐ Product advertisements  ☐ Discount/promotion information
   - ☐ We don’t use in-store flyers
   - ☐ Other: ____________________________________________
5. How often does your business advertise in printed publications such as newspapers and magazines?
   - Never
   - Yearly
   - Monthly
   - Weekly
   - Daily

b. What does your business use printed advertisements for? (Check all that apply)
   - New product information
   - General store information
   - We don’t advertise in printed publications
   - Other:_____________________________________

6. How often does your business advertise online other than a website and social media? (For example, Farm and Dairy or the Country Journal online)
   - Never
   - Yearly
   - Monthly
   - Weekly
   - Daily

b. What does your business use online advertisements for? (Check all that apply)
   - New product information
   - General store information
   - We don’t advertise online
   - Other:_____________________________________

7. How often does your business use radio advertising?
   - Never
   - Yearly
   - Monthly
   - Weekly
   - Daily

b. What does your business use radio advertising for? (Check all that apply)
   - New product information
   - General store information
   - We don’t advertise on the radio
   - Other:_____________________________________

8. How often does your business advertise using billboards or road-signs?
   - Never
   - Yearly
   - Monthly
   - Weekly
   - Daily

b. What does your business use billboards and road-signs for? (Check all that apply)
   - New product information
   - General store information
   - We don’t advertise using billboards or road-signs
   - Other:_____________________________________
9. What do you feel is the most effective tool to **advertise products** to customers?  
(Please rank the top 10, 1 being the most effective, 10 being the least)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool</th>
<th>Rank</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Postal Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>Email</td>
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<tr>
<td>In store flyers</td>
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<td>Social media</td>
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<td>Online advertising</td>
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<tr>
<td>Billboards/road signs</td>
<td>___</td>
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<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other: __________________________</td>
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</table>

b. Why? __________________________

10. What is the most effective tool to communicate **new product information**?  
(Please rank the top 10, 1 being the most effective, 10 being the least)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool</th>
<th>Rank</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Postal Service</td>
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<td>Online advertising</td>
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<td>Billboards/road signs</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other: __________________________</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

b. Why? __________________________

11. What is the most effective tool to communicate **general store information**?  
(Please rank the top 10, 1 being the most effective, 10 being the least)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool</th>
<th>Rank</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Postal Service</td>
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<td>In store flyers</td>
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<td>Billboards/road signs</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
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<td>Other: __________________________</td>
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</table>

12. What is the most effective tool to communicate **discount and promotional information**?  
(Please rank the top 10, 1 being the most effective, 10 being the least)

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Tool</th>
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<td>Postal Service</td>
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<td>In store flyers</td>
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<td>Social media</td>
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<td>Billboards/road signs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other: __________________________</td>
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</table>

b. Why? __________________________
13. What is the most effective tool to communicate educational information? (Please rank the top 10, 1 being the most effective, 10 being the least)

___ Postal Service ___ Email ___ Website
___ In store flyers ___ Print advertising ___ Radio advertising
___ Social media ___ Online advertising ___ Face-to-face communication
___ Billboards/road signs ___ N/A ___ Other: ____________________________

b. Why? ____________________________

14. What is the most effective tool to communicate information on government legislation? (Please rank the top 10, 1 being the most effective, 10 being the least)

___ Postal Service ___ Email ___ Website
___ In store flyers ___ Print advertising ___ Radio advertising
___ Social media ___ Online advertising ___ Face-to-face communication
___ Billboards/road signs ___ N/A ___ Other: ____________________________

b. Why? ____________________________

15. What size do you consider your business from 1=small to 7=large?

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<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Large</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

16. Please check the level of OABA membership that your business belongs to:

☐ Class A: Sales volume of $100,000 and under
☐ Class B: Sales volume of $100,001-$5,000,000
☐ Class C: Sales volume of $5,000,001-$10,000,000
☐ Class D: Sales volume of $10,000,001-$25,000,000
☐ Class E: Sales volume of $25,000,001-$50,000,000
☐ Class F: Sales volume of $50,000,001 and over

17. How many years has your business been operating? (Please fill in the number of years)

18. How many facilities do you have? (Please fill in the number of facilities)
19. How many people are employed at your business?

_______(Please fill in the number of people employed at all of your locations)

20. Who is responsible for the marketing and communications in your business?

☐ The owner ☐ A full time marketing professional
☐ A part time employee ☐ We hire outside the company
☐ Anyone that gets to it ☐ Other: ________________________________

21. What type of training does the person who is responsible for marketing and communication have?

☐ None ☐ Self-taught ☐ Workshop training ☐ Bachelor’s Degree ☐ Graduate Degree

22. How important do you think marketing/communication is to your business?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not important Very important

b. Why? ________________________________________________________________

23. Does your business have a marketing plan?

☐ Yes ☐ No

24. What percentage of your business’s annual income is dedicated to marketing and communicating with customers?

☐ Less than 1% ☐ 1-5%
☐ 6-10% ☐ 11-15%
☐ 16-20% ☐ 21-25%
☐ More than 25% ☐ I don’t know

25. Do you think your business has an effective or ineffective marketing/communication strategy?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not effective Highly effective

b. Why? ________________________________________________________________
26. What is your position in the company?

______________________________________________________________________________

27. How long have you been employed by the company?

_______ years

28. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

☐ Some high school ○ High school ○ Some college
☐ Associate’s degree ○ Bachelor’s degree ○ Graduate degree

29. Please indicate your gender

☐ Male ○ Female

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO FILL OUT THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.
Appendix C: OABA Questionnaire Insert
Dear Valued OABA Member,

The Ohio AgriBusiness Association (OABA) has partnered with Ohio State University graduate student Stacy Jewell to create the enclosed questionnaire. The bulk of the information you provide will be used in Stacy’s research study. It will give insight into Ohio agribusinesses' marketing and communication practices. She will analyze current strategies and channels of communication utilized and collect data on the most effective tactics from agribusinesses' point of view.

In addition to providing important data for Stacy’s research study, OABA will use the demographic information to update and strengthen our membership database. Your feedback will be used to help our organization better serve your needs. Understanding your business will enable us to improve services and increase your return on investment as a member. We appreciate you taking the time to fill out the questions completely.

For your efforts, we will have a drawing for those who choose to participate. **If you turn in your questionnaire by January 30, you will be entered into a drawing to win a $250 gift card to Best Buy courtesy of the OABA.**

Thank you again for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Please return it in the envelope provided by **January 30.**

Sincerely,

Christopher Henney

President & CEO

**PLEASE SEE THE REVERSE SIDE TO ANSWER QUESTIONS**
OABA will use the following information to update and strengthen their membership database. **If your business has multiple locations/branches, please copy this sheet and fill it out according to each location.**

Business Name: ________________________________
Branch/Location: ________________________________

1. Please check any area that describes your business or products:
   - Anhydrous ammonia
   - Equipment mfr/dist/install
   - Grain dryer
   - Animal health products
   - Farm supply
   - Grain brokerage
   - Bulk feed truck
   - Feed
   - Main office
   - Branch office
   - Flour milling
   - Petroleum products
   - Chemicals
   - Fertilizer
   - Access to a railroad
   - Custom application/spreading
   - Grain
   - Track

2. Does your business offer grain storage?
   - Yes
   - No

3. What kind of grain do you store? (Please check all boxes that apply)
   - Corn
   - Oats
   - Soybeans
   - Wheat
   - N/A
   - Other: ________________________________

4. What is the grain storage capacity at this location/branch?
   ______ bu. Total
   - N/A

5. Please list your employees’ email addresses and positions within your business.

<table>
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<th>Employee Name</th>
<th>Email Address</th>
<th>Position</th>
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Appendix D: Pre-notice Postcard
Dear Ohio AgriBusiness Association Member,

We are working with the OABA on a research study about Ohio agricultural businesses.

We will be sending you a survey soon...

You could win a $250 Best Buy gift card!

Compliments of the OABA

We appreciate your help with this study and the timely return of the survey!

Stacy Jewell, OSU Graduate Student
Emily Rhoades, PhD.
Appendix E: Reminder Postcard
Dear Ohio AgriBusiness Association Member:

Thank you to those who took the time to fill out the survey!

Don’t Forget!

If you haven’t had the chance to fill it out yet, you can go to:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/oabastudy

to complete it.

You can still win the...

$250 gift card to Best Buy!

Stacy Jewell, OSU Graduate Student
and Emily Rhoades, PhD.
Appendix F: Second Reminder Postcard
Ohio AgriBusiness Association Member:

Thank you to those who filled out the survey!

If you haven’t had the chance to fill it out yet, please go to the link at the bottom of this card to fill it out by **MARCH 16**.

You can still win the...
$250 gift card to Best Buy!

We appreciate your participation in this study!

Stacy Jewell, OSU Graduate Student
and Emily Rhoades, PhD.

www.surveymonkey.com/s/oabastudy