Participant Satisfaction Related to Social Presence in Agricultural Conversations using Twitter: Implications for Agricultural Communications

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Abstract

Communication has shifted from predominantly face-to-face environments to greater use of computer-mediated environments (CMC) such as social networking sites for sharing information, meeting new people, and learning. Aspects of CMC related to perceptions of social presence impact the way communication occurs in un-mediated environments. This study examined perceived social presence, participant satisfaction, and relationships between social presence and satisfaction among Twitter users during streaming conversations. Data was collected through an online questionnaire that was created using qualtrics.com and made available to respondents over a one-week period. Two groups of survey respondents agreed with 10 out of 21 and 13 out of 21 statements about social presence and 10 out of 13 and 12 out of 13 statements about satisfaction. Findings indicated that positive and negative relationships exist between social presence and satisfaction. It was concluded that participants felt they were in close virtual proximity with other participants and that social presence can be fostered through text-based variables, such as emoticons, to compensate for lack of nonverbal or face-to-face cues. Therefore, agricultural educators and communicators should use techniques that foster social presence to support virtual relationships and circulate honest agricultural information through chatting, messaging, and blogging.

Keywords: Twitter, social presence, #agchat, #gardenchat, agricultural communications, social media, computer-mediated communication