

Four top trends having big impacts on agricultural communications

As 2018 got under way, Chuck Zimmerman of ZimmComm New Media came up with this Top Four list:

- Continued explosion of technology/new media allowing everyone to directly communicate with everyone else in the whole world without a gatekeeper like traditional media
- Boom in mergers and acquisitions causing change and uncertainty
- Agencies growing as content creators/publishers for clients
- Commodity prices sliding downward and budgets shrinking

You can read his blog [here](#).

“Strategic obfuscation” in retail pricing of coffee and soft drinks

German and French retail scanner data indicated in a recent research study that offering unique consumer packaged goods may be an effective way to generate higher margins than would otherwise be the case. Authors noted that retailers have an incentive to offer unique package sizes or flavors, for example. In that situation, buyers can't easily compare prices across products and stores.

The analysis also revealed that retail margins were 14.5% higher when an item was sold at only one store, compared to when it was sold at all stores. Authors concluded that “we cannot rule out strategic obfuscation as a feature of our retail sales data.”

You can read the research report [here](#).

Following digital breadcrumbs toward truth and trust in food information

Digital ethnography served as a tool the Center for Food Integrity used recently to examine what makes food news and information credible. CFI observed 8,500 consumers online across two years and multiple social channels. Results identified five consumer segments:

- “Scientist” (truth is objective, evidence-based science)
- “Philosopher” (looks through the ethics lens)

- “Follower” (fears making the wrong food decisions)
- “Wishful Thinker” (trusts big, sweeping claims from varied sources)
- “Existentialist” (truth is what feels true)

Results prompted the suggestion that “communicating with values that others share, or can relate to, is the key to earning trust. ...three-to-five times more important in earning trust than simply sharing facts.”

You can read the research summary [here](#).

Scouting for agriculture-related information on risk communications?

You can identify more than 2,200 documents about this topic in the unique ACDC collection.

- They span more than a century, from 1911 to date
- They address communications about risks involving animal welfare, food safety, uses of biotechnology in food and agriculture, diseases, environmental quality, biological diversity, farm-life safety, energy supplies, water conservation, and other topics
- They involve experiences in many countries throughout the world
- They relate to all means of communicating about risk, from face-to-face through new social media
- They range from books, journal articles, and research reports to “how to” items and points of view about risks and communications issues.

You can use the robust ACDC search system, BibLeaves, to identify these documents quickly and learn how to gain access to them. Just visit the “[Search Tips](#)” section to get acquainted with it.

Comparing website quality of rural and urban small businesses

We recently added to the ACDC collection a 2012 journal article about whether urban and rural small business websites in Scotland differ in terms of their levels of quality. Researchers used an adapted Web Assessment Index originally developed by Gonzalez and Palacios. Findings identified no significant differences in the level of website quality between Scottish rural and urban small business. The Index is provided with the article.

Authors concluded that “website quality issues are amongst those that are not affected by location, despite the much reported entrepreneurship, skills and resource deficit in rural areas relative to urban ones.”

You can read the abstract [here](#), or check with us at docctr@illinois.edu for help in gaining access.

Communicator events approaching

April 8-10, 2018

Annual meeting of the North American Agricultural Journalists (NAAJ) in Washington, D.C. Information: <http://www.naaj.net/meetings>

April 11-13, 2018

“Power Up” Agri-Marketing Conference of the National Agri-Marketing Association (NAMA) in Kansas City, Missouri.

Information: <http://nama.org/amc/home-2018>

April 16-20, 2018

Conference of the Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education (AIAEE) in Merida, Yucatan, Mexico.

Information: <https://www.aiaee.org/>

June 2-5, 2018

“Earn your spurs: communicate in the Lone Star State” Annual Institute of the Cooperative Communicators Association (CCA) in Fort Worth, Texas.

Information at: <https://www.communicators.coop/2018Institute/>

August 4-8, 2018

“Everything under the Sun” Twentieth annual Agricultural Media Summit in Scottsdale, Arizona. Participants include AAEE – The Agricultural Communicators Network; Livestock Publications Council (LPC), Connectiv Agri-Media Committee; Association for Communication Excellence in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Life and Human Sciences (ACE); and the national Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow (ACT)

Information: www.agmediasummit.com

Communicating about the hottest hobby in the country

We close this issue of *ACDC News* with congratulations to keen agricultural journalist John Harvey for sharing his talents as teacher. In an e-note entitled “You must be kidding,” he reports that he is teaching a class in the Lifelong Learning Academy. The course features a field of interest that John has long helped develop, nationally: “Discover Classic Farm Tractors, the Hottest Hobby in the Country.” We will bet his class members are having a ball as they learn.

You may be aware that John contributed his large collection of Volume One Number One issues of U. S. farm papers and magazines to the Agricultural Communications Documentation Center for historical research and reference. You can learn more about it [here](#).

Best wishes and good searching

Please pass along your reactions, suggestions and ideas. Feel free to invite our help as you search for information. Don't forget to follow us on Twitter [@ACDCUIUC](#). And please suggest (or send) agricultural communications documents we might add to this unique and valuable collection. We welcome them in hard copy (sent to Ag Comm Documentation Center, Room 510, 1101 S. Goodwin Avenue, Urbana, IL 61801) or in electronic format sent to docctr@library.illinois.edu