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Platform Comparison Essay

The story of agriculture is one that needs to be heard around the world. This story has been shared with the public in numerous ways throughout the years on diverse devices. These devices have progressed tremendously over the years, from magazines to podcasts, and even social media platforms like TikTok. These three specific communication platforms all share the overall goal of educating, informing, and entertaining the public. What makes these platforms diverse and unique is how differently each one goes about achieving that goal.

Magazines are an earlier platform of communication that have numerous features making them effective for communicating about the agricultural industry. Agricultural magazines like the Farm Journal, Successful Farming, Progressive Farmer, and more cover a wide range of topics, educating and providing practical advice and insights for farmers. Magazines for farmers, especially in isolated areas, routinely provide them with information. They do this because farmers have subscriptions to the magazines and depend on receiving them. Whether the magazines cover topics on the latest farming technologies, share personal farming stories, or discuss farming strategies, agricultural magazines play a strong role in agricultural communications. Within the agricultural community, these magazines educate, inform, and entertain the audience.

Magazines were in the spotlight for many years, but joining the spotlight later down the road were podcasts. While magazines provided visuals for the viewers, podcasts introduced

on-demand audio content that could be accessed at any time or anywhere. According to Reading Rockets, "...the biggest benefit of podcasting is that listeners can tune in when they want to, since podcasts don't go anywhere once they're published." This offered some advantages to the agricultural industry that magazines could not. The agricultural community is always busy, and this new communication platform offers them the flexibility to access information on the go. Farmers and ranchers can access these podcasts from the tractor in the field or in a truck on a parts run. This feature adds many positives to the world of communications.

Podcasts, however, are not all positive; they do have some disadvantages for agriculturists compared to magazines. Podcasts are entirely audio, and because of that, the audience can only listen. This takes away the ability for the audience to go back and read any piece of agricultural information at any time. Instead, they would have to listen to the podcast again. Additionally, not everywhere in the world has the technology allowed for this platform to work. For instance, in places with low internet or even no internet, it is impossible to download and access this communication platform. This makes it impossible for agriculturists to access the information provided in the podcast. Magazines also have some disadvantages for agriculturists. Magazines are not produced daily; they are produced periodically, meaning that the data in them could quickly become outdated. The podcast platform, however, can be produced daily and always have up-to-date information being communicated to agriculturists. Both platforms have advantages and disadvantages when compared to each other; however, both still achieve the same overall goal: to educate, inform, and entertain.

Social media is one of the fastest ways to spread information. Agriculturists are now utilizing the new digital platform TikTok to communicate. Unlike most traditional communications platforms, this digital platform's main feature specializes in short-form video

content, typically ranging from a few seconds to a minute. This feature allows for quick and engaging storytelling. According to Grand Canyon University, “The defining characteristic of TikTok is its short-length videos. Because of this, the use of TikTok for educational purposes lends itself best to capturing student attention, boosting student engagement, and delivering small, digestible chunks of information, as opposed to cultivating critical and deep thinking.” This showcases the benefits TikTok has for educating the public. Agriculturists have been utilizing this feature to educate the public on agriculture. They use the platform to display farming practices, share educational facts, and debunk myths surrounding agriculture. Additionally, agriculturists can also learn from fellow agriculturists on this platform. This was found in a research study by Penn State University, “Top Ag users on TikTok turn to the platform to educate audiences on their farm operations and address user questions and perceptions of farming. The hashtag #agriculture has over 9 billion views.” TikTok may look like a fun digital app that entertains, but it also educates, and agriculturists are using that to their advantage. This new digital platform overall achieves its goal: to educate, inform, and entertain the public.

TikTok does have some disadvantages for agriculturists. This digital platform features only short video clips, and because of this limit, it struggles to provide detailed explanations. When comparing this digital platform to magazines and podcasts, you can quickly notice this specific missing feature. On both the magazine and podcast communication platforms, agriculturists can provide detailed explanations on certain topics and extensive information on certain topics. TikTok may excel in visual storytelling and engaging the audience; however, it may sometimes lack in successfully communicating with its audience.

The comparison between communication platforms like magazines and podcasts alongside newer digital platforms like TikTok displays the importance of a multi-platform

approach in agricultural communications. Each platform offers a unique experience for the viewer, and each platform has the same overall goal. While magazines offer in-depth analysis and podcasts provide on-the-go immersive storytelling, TikTok excels in visual engagement and audience interaction. Each platform has strengths for different messages and audiences within the agricultural community. The story of agriculture is an extraordinary story that always needs to be told to all audiences no matter what platform.

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