

Examining the Use of Social Media among Four-H Alumni in Louisiana

Kali B. Zammit

Louisiana State University AgCenter

kzammit@agcenter.lsu.edu

Abstract: The purpose of this study was to examine the use and determine the preferred method of social media among 4-H alumni in Louisiana. Based on a review of literature, communicating with youth through social media has become a major trend and necessity, especially among 4-H Youth Development and Cooperative Extension Service professionals. A 24-item instrument was developed and administered online to Louisiana 4-H alumni who received the 2011 Louisiana 4-H Senior Honor Cord and provided usable e-mails.

The overall preferred method of social media among Louisiana 4-H alumni was Facebook and text messaging. A majority of 4-H alumni use their smart phones or personal computers to utilize social media. Some of the primary reasons that 4-H alumni use social media are to communicate with friends, view photographs, and become updated with current events. Overall, 100% of surveyed 4-H alumni use some form of social media.

Introduction

According to a study conducted as part of the Pew Internet and American Life Project, "Some 93% of teens use the internet, and more of them than ever are treating it as a venue for social interaction – a place where they can share creations, tell stories, and interact with others" (Lenhart, Madden, Macgill, & Smith, 2007, p. 2). As technology advances, teenage youth become familiar with a new method of communication, thus creating new technological trends. In an age where e-mail was once the epitome of technological communication techniques, e-mailing has become a second form of communication compared to texting, instant messaging, and social networking, especially among teens (Lenhart, Madden, Macgill, & Smith, 2007).

"Social networking is the number one activity on the web (eXtension Initiative, March 2010) and is replacing e-mail communication in the younger generations" (Robideau & Santl, 2011, p. 1).

Social networking can be defined as "the use of Web sites or other online technologies to communicate with people and share information, resources, etc." (<http://dictionary.reference.com>). People are using forms of technology for social networking purposes. "Forms of electronic communication (as Web sites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (as videos)" is called social media (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary>). In other words, people use sources of social media to social network, or communicate online with other people. Although not all teens participate in social media websites, social networking has become part of an American teen culture in a short span of time (Boyd, 2008).

Throughout the past few years, people spend much of their time online using social media. There are various forms of social media, including blogs, Facebook, and Twitter, all of which are websites that can be used for social networking (Fuess, 2011). Most social networking sites have the option of creating a personalized, individual profile that may contain text, images, and videos for the public to view (Boyd, 2008). As Danah Boyd (2008) stated, "The social network site profile also contains comments from other members and a public list of the people that one identifies as Friends within the network" (p. 123). According to Pew Research Center (2010), "Nearly three quarters (72%) of online 18-29 year olds use these sites – similar to the rate among teens – with 45% doing so on a typical day" ("Social Media," p. 18).

Knowing that social media has become a continuous trend among online users, organizations and businesses have joined the push to publicize and educate through social networking. "Companies and organizations are realizing that engaging in social media can allow for 'highly participative' interaction with customers and constituents which makes them feel more loyal and positive towards the company or organization performing the outreach (Culnan, 2010)" (Fuess, 2011, p. 7). As Fuess (2011) stated:

Particularly for non-profits, social media provide a new venue to marketing and outreach. Social media is a form of social marketing, on which many non-profits rely. Social marketing 'uses traditional marketing strategies to create social change by maximizing audience response' (Skelly, 2005). (p. 7).

As a non-profit organization, the Cooperative Extension Service currently uses social media to provide research-based information to a wide variety of clientele in order to increase its outreach and impact (Fuess, 2011). The Cooperative Extension Service can utilize social media to "raise awareness about programs, help educate the public, attract new constituents, and enhance communication" (Fuess, 2011, p. 9).

The 4-H Youth Development Program is one of the major programming areas within the Cooperative Extension Service. The mission of the 4-H Youth Development Program is as follows: "4-H empowers youth to reach their full potential, working and learning in partnership with caring adults" (National 4-H Council, 2011, para. 1). Considering the mission of the 4-H program, 4-H Extension Agent/Educators have the responsibility of partnering and communicating with youth in order to develop their basic life skills. In an effort to address the needs of youth, 4-H agents need to stay abreast of the current trends of youth, including the use of social media. 4-H agents must be willing to learn and implement current communication plans with youth using technology (Robideau & Santl, 2011). As researchers Robideau and Santl

(2011) suggested, "If programs do not keep up with online learning and the evolving communication tools, young people and their families will gravitate toward other programs that do provide 21st Century learning experiences" (p. 1). Therefore, understanding the current communication trends of youth is vital to conducting a successful youth development program.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the use and determine the preferred method in which 4-H alumni youth in Louisiana currently utilize social media. Adapting to the interests and trends of youth is critical in the youth development profession. By understanding the current technology trends of youth, 4-H agents/educators can utilize social media according to the interests of youth in order to have a greater impact and disseminate educational information to a broader audience.

Research Objectives

1. To describe 4-H alumni youth affiliated with the 2011 Louisiana 4-H Youth Development Program based on general demographics including education, 4-H involvement, and ownership of social media devices.
2. To describe 4-H alumni youth affiliated with the 2011 Louisiana 4-H Youth Development Program on the following social media characteristics:
 - a) Types of social media currently used
 - b) Number of hours per day spent using social media
 - c) Primary source used for social media
 - d) Attraction to social media
 - e) Purpose of using social media
 - f) Use of selected social media
 - g) Perceived comfort in using social media
 - h) Ranking of preferred social media tool
 - i) Request for 4-H Facebook page features
3. To determine how Louisiana 4-H Alumni like to use social media as measured by the Zammit Social Media Questionnaire.

Methodology

Population and Sample

The target population of this study was 2011 4-H alumni in Louisiana. The accessible population was Louisiana 4-H alumni from 2011 who received the Louisiana 4-H Senior Honor Cord Award and whose e-mail addresses were provided. The 2011 Louisiana 4-H Senior Honor Cord Award was given to 319 recipients. Of the 319 Award recipients, the researcher obtained 172 e-mail addresses from contact information provided on the Louisiana 4-H Senior Honor Cord Award application. The researcher obtained an additional 16 e-mail addresses through Facebook contact. A total of 27 e-mail addresses were undeliverable or unusable. A final accessible population of 161 4-H alumni, whose e-mails were usable, was targeted for this study. This study was considered a census (100% sample) of all 2011 Louisiana 4-H alumni who provided usable e-mail address as 2011 Louisiana 4-H Senior Honor Cord recipients.

Instrumentation

The Zammit Social Media Questionnaire was created to serve as the instrument to examine the use of social media among 4-H alumni youth in Louisiana for the purposes of this study. The

Zammit Social Media Questionnaire was developed to determine the frequency, sources, and reasoning in which 4-H members utilize social media. The instrument includes a variety of questioning techniques, including multiple choice, multiple answer, open-ended, ranking, and Likert scale. The first section of the questionnaire focused on asking basic questions regarding use and preference of social media through multiple choice and multiple answer questions. The second section of the questionnaire focused on comfort and preference of social media activities using multiple answer, ranking, Likert scale, and open-ended questions. The third section of the questionnaire included demographic questions to describe the population in terms of age, gender, race or ethnicity, residence, 4-H membership, 4-H Junior Leadership Club members, education, and ownership of social media devices.

The Zammit Social Media Questionnaire was analyzed for reliability, and the Cronbach's Alpha score was .964. According to Hair, (2006), any score over 0.9 is considered outstanding reliability.

Data Collection

The instrument used to collect research data was a questionnaire created through an online survey system (Zoomerang). This method of research is considered economical, convenient, and relative to the study. Using an online survey system aligns with the research objectives by using a form of social media (email) to distribute the questionnaire. Platform Louisiana 4-H alumni of 2011 who received the 2011 Louisiana 4-H Senior Honor Cord Award and provided a useable e-mail address were surveyed in this study.

Multiple contacts were made to increase the validity of the study (Dillman, 2007). The following process was used to collect data for the study:

1. Approximately one month prior to distributing the survey, the researcher sent a brief letter via e-mail to respondents regarding the study and requesting participation in the questionnaire. The researcher also contacted those participants who did not provide a usable e-mail address on their 2011 Louisiana 4-H Senior Honor Cord application through Facebook. The researcher sent a message to Facebook users regarding the study and requesting their participation in the questionnaire.
2. The Zammit Social Media Questionnaire was sent via e-mail approximately one month after the initial contact with respondents. The e-mail consisted of a cover letter to request participation in the study and to provide instructions for completing the questionnaire. In order to track student response, the researcher sent a message to Facebook participants requesting a usable e-mail address in which they would receive a URL-link to complete the questionnaire. Those Facebook users who responded with an e-mail address were immediately sent an e-mail consisting of the same cover letter to request participation in the study and to provide instructions for completing the questionnaire.
3. One week after sending the questionnaire, the researcher sent a friendly reminder to all non-respondents via e-mail with a URL-link to the survey.
4. One day after sending the reminder e-mail, all non-respondents were sent another reminder e-mail emphasizing the importance of their participation in the survey along with a URL-link to the questionnaire.
5. One day after sending the second reminder e-mail, all non-respondents received a reminder e-mail requesting their participation in the survey. The researcher offered all respondents a chance to win one of three iTunes gift cards, which were mailed to the selected recipients. The e-mail also emphasized the overall importance of their

participation and its relation to the 4-H program along with a URL-link leading to the questionnaire.

6. Two days after sending the third reminder, the researcher sent all non-respondents a final e-mail notification to complete the questionnaire. The researcher emphasized the importance of participation in the questionnaire and restated that all questionnaire respondents will have the chance to win one of three iTunes gift cards for their participation in the study.

Upon completion of data collection, the researcher analyzed the data by reading and reviewing each questionnaire. Answers to the questionnaire were grouped into themes that emerged from the data. Result findings were confirmed through thorough analysis of data.

A total of 32 respondents completed the web-based questionnaire. The final response count was 32 responses out of a possible 161 respondent (19.9% response rate). The responses which are represented by response wave are presented in Table 1, which can be found on the subsequent page.

Findings

Population Demographics

Objective one was to describe 4-H alumni youth affiliated with the 2011 Louisiana 4-H Youth Development Program basic demographic characteristics. The ages ranged from 18 to 20 years. The largest group of respondents indicated their age was 18 years ($n = 13$, 48.2%). The second largest group indicated their age was 19 years ($n = 12$, 44.4%). Majority of the respondents indicated their gender as female ($n = 22$, 68.75%) while 10 respondents (31.25%) indicated their gender as male. Majority of the respondents identified themselves as White ($n = 24$, 77%). The second largest group identified themselves as Black or African American ($n = 6$, 20%). The respondents were also described in terms of their residence, or area in which they now reside. Majority of the respondents identified themselves as living on a farm or in a rural area ($n = 14$, 43.75%). The second largest group identified themselves as living in a town with a population under 10,000 people ($n = 8$, 25.00%).

Participants were asked to indicate the number of years in which they were a 4-H member. The number of years in which respondents were a 4-H member ranged from 3 to 10 years. The largest group of respondents indicated that they were a 4-H member for 9 years ($n = 12$, 38.7%). The second largest groups indicated the same number of responses for being a 4-H member for 7 and 8 years ($n = 5$, 16.1%). The number of years in which respondents were a parish 4-H Junior Leadership Club member ranged from 0 to 7 years. The largest group of respondents indicated that they were not a member of their Parish 4-H Junior Leadership Club ($n = 8$, 25%). Results show that the two second largest groups include the same number of respondents who indicated that they were a parish 4-H Junior Leadership Club member for 4 and 5 years ($n = 7$, 22%).

Respondents identified their highest level of education in which they completed or are currently enrolled. The largest group of the respondents ($n = 18$, 56%) reported completion or enrollment in a 4-year college program. The second largest group ($n = 10$, 31%) reported completion of a high school diploma or GED.

Participants were asked to indicate their ownership of various social media devices, in which they were able to select ownership of more than one device if applicable. The largest number of respondents ($n = 29$, 91%) reported that they own a desktop or laptop computer. The second

largest number of respondents ($n = 27$, 84%) reported that they own a smart phone. Table 8 illustrates data regarding ownership of social media devices.

Table 1

Ownership of Social Media Devices as Reported by Louisiana 4-H Alumni that Completed the Zammit Social Media Questionnaire

Social Media Device	n	Percentage ^a
Desktop or laptop computer	29	91
Smart phone	27	84
iPod or mp3 player	22	69
Cell phone	20	63
Gaming device (such as X-bow, Play Station, or Wii)	12	38
iPad or similar tablet device	5	16
Total	32 respondents	

Note: Table 1 will not add up to 100% as respondents were able to select more than one response.

^aPercentage rounded to nearest %.

Use of Social Media among 4-H Alumni

Objective two was to describe 4-H alumni youth affiliated with the 2011 Louisiana 4-H Youth Development Program on several social media characteristics. Participants were asked to indicate the types of social media that they currently use, in which they could select more than one of the following categories: 1) Facebook; 2) Twitter; 3) Blogs; 4) Discussion Boards; 5) Text Messaging; 6) MySpace; 7) Flickr; 8) YouTube; 9) Google Circles; 10) Pinterest; 11) I do not use social media; 12) Other. The largest group of respondents indicated that they use Facebook ($n = 30$, 94%). The second largest group indicated that they use text messaging ($n = 26$, 81%). Table 9 illustrates the types of social media currently used by Louisiana 4-H Alumni that completed the Zammit Social Media Questionnaire.

Table 2

Types of Social Media Currently Used by Louisiana 4-H Alumni that Completed the Zammit Social Media Questionnaire

Type of Social Media	n	Percentage ^a
Facebook	30	94
Text Messaging	26	81
YouTube	16	50
Twitter	12	38
Pinterest	12	38
Blogs	4	13
Discussion Boards	2	6
Google Circles	2	6
Flickr	1	3
Other	1	3
MySpace	0	0
I do not use social media	0	0
Total	32 responses	

Note: Table 2 will not add up to 100% as respondents were able to select more than one response.

^aPercentage rounded to nearest %.

The largest group of respondents indicated that they use social media 1-3 hours per day ($n = 16, 50\%$).

Table 3

Number of Hours per day spent using Social Media Reported by Louisiana 4-H Alumni that Completed the Zammit Social Media Questionnaire

Hours per day	n	Percentage ^a
I do not use social media	0	0
Less than 1 hour per day	5	16
1-3 hours per day	16	50
4-6 hours per day	8	25
7-9 hours per day	2	6
10 or more hours per day	1	3
Total	32	100

^aTotal rounded to 100%

The largest group of respondents indicated that they use a smart phone to access social media ($n = 16, 50\%$). The second largest group indicated that they use a personal computer (laptop, desktop) to access social media ($n = 8, 25\%$).

Table 4

Primary Source used to Access Social Media as Reported by Louisiana 4-H Alumni that Completed the Zammit Social Media Questionnaire

Social Media Source	n	Percentage ^a
Smart phone	16	50
Personal computer (laptop, desktop)	8	25
Cell phone	7	22
iPad	1	3
Tablet other than iPad	0	0
Library or public computer	0	0
I do not use social media	0	0
Other	0	0
Total	32	100

^aTotal rounded to 100%

The largest group of respondents indicated that they are attracted to communicating with friends through social media ($n = 23, 72\%$).

Table 5

Features that Attract 4-H Alumni to Social Media as Reported by Louisiana
4-H Alumni that Completed the Zammit Social Media Questionnaire

Features	n	Percentage ^a
Communicating with friends	23	72
Pictures	19	59
Instant access to information	15	47
Viewing others' status	13	41
Applications for smart phones	11	34
Sharing / posting links	8	25
Games	4	13
Videos	4	13
Discussion boards	3	9
Other	3	9
I do not use social media	0	0
Total	32 responses	

Note: Table 5 will not add up to 100% as respondents were able to select more than one response.

^aPercentages are rounded to the nearest %.

The largest group of respondents indicated that they use social media for the purpose of communicating with family and/or friends ($n = 30$, 94%).

Table 6

Reported Purposes that 4-H Alumni use Social Media by Louisiana
4-H Alumni that Completed the Zammit Social Media Questionnaire

Purposes	n	Percentage ^a
To communicate with family and/or friends	30	94
To become updated on friends' activities	24	75
To become updated on events	21	66
To find people (old friends, classmates, etc.)	21	66
For using applications for smart phones	11	34
To meet new people	9	28
To promote a business / organization	7	22
For playing online games	6	19
Other	0	0
Total	32 responses	

Note: Table 6 will not add up to 100% as respondents were able to select more than one response.

^aPercentages are rounded to the nearest %.

The largest groups of respondents with the same number of responses indicated that they send text messages to friends very often and never participate in discussion boards ($n = 20$, 67%).

Table 7

Frequency of 4-H Alumni using Social Media as Reported by Louisiana
4-H Alumni that Completed the Zammit Social Media Questionnaire

Activity	Never	Seldom (1-5 times per week or less)	Sometimes (6-10 times per week)	Often (11-15 times per week)	Very often (more than 15 times per week)
Comment on others' profiles, photos, and/or videos	22%	22%	38%	3%	16%
"Like" pages	16%	34%	28%	16%	6%
Visit pages that you "like"	34%	31%	16%	9%	9%
Post photos or videos	16%	55%	13%	6%	10%
View others' photos	6%	16%	55%	10%	13%
View others' videos	30%	20%	33%	10%	7%
Participate in a discussion board	67%	13%	17%	3%	0%
Play games using social media	63%	27%	7%	3%	0%
Send a text message to a friend	3%	10%	10%	10%	67%
Update your status on your social media profile	12%	47%	9%	16%	16%

Note: Percentage refers to percent of respondents who responded to each item. Percentages are rounded to the nearest percent.

The largest group of respondents indicated that they use text messaging continually (1-2 times per day) ($n = 27, 87\%$).

Table 8

Frequency of 4-H Alumni using Social Media Tools as Reported by Louisiana
4-H Alumni that Completed the Zammit Social Media Questionnaire

Social Media Tools	Never	Not often (1-2 times per month)	Sometimes (1-2 times per week)	Continually (1-2 times per day)
Facebook	3 9%	2 6%	2 6%	25 78%
Twitter	12 48%	3 12%	2 8%	8 32%
Flickr	21 100%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%
YouTube	4 15%	7 26%	10 37%	6 22%
MySpace	22 96%	1 4%	0 0%	0 0%
Discussion Boards	18 75%	3 12%	3 12%	0 0%
Blogs	19 83%	1 4%	0 0%	3 13%
Google Circles	22 96%	1 4%	0 0%	0 0%
Text Messaging	0 0%	1 3%	3 10%	27 87%
Pinterest	14 54%	5 19%	4 15%	3 12%

Note: Percentage refers to percent of respondents who responded to each item. Percentages are rounded to the nearest percent.

The largest group of respondents indicated that they feel very comfortable having a video of themselves participating in a 4-H event posted on a 4-H Facebook page ($n = 20$, 65%). The second largest group of respondents indicated that they feel very comfortable posting pictures and/or videos through social media. ($n = 20$, 62%).

Table 9

Perceived Comfort in using Social Media as Reported by Louisiana 4-H Alumni that Completed the Zammit Social Media Questionnaire

Activity	Very uncomfortable	Somewhat uncomfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable	N/A (I do not do this)
Posting pictures and/or videos	0 0%	1 3%	5 16%	20 62%	6 19%
Commenting on your own wall/profile	0 0%	2 6%	6 19%	15 47%	9 28%
Commenting on someone else's wall/profile	0 0%	1 3%	8 25%	17 53%	6 19%
Commenting on posted pictures or videos	0 0%	2 6%	6 19%	17 53%	7 22%
Having your picture on a 4-H Facebook page	0 0%	1 3%	4 12%	19 59%	8 25%
Having a video of you participating in a 4-H event on a 4-H Facebook page	0 0%	0 0%	3 10%	20 65%	8 26%
Interacting with your 4-H agent through social media	1 3%	1 3%	5 16%	17 53%	8 25%

Note: Percentage refers to percent of respondents who responded to each item. Percentages are rounded to the nearest percent.

Participants were asked to identify the features that they would like to see on a 4-H Facebook page. Participants responded in an open-ended format. Common responses included incorporating features such as pictures and updated events on a 4-H Facebook page.

Preference of Social Media among 4-H Alumni

Objective three was to determine how Louisiana 4-H Alumni like to use social media as measured by the Zammit Social Media Questionnaire. The two largest groups of respondents indicated that they agree with liking to communicate with their 4-H agent through social media and liking to view others' photos ($n = 15, 47\%$).

Table 10

Perception of How Louisiana 4-H Alumni Like Using Social Media as Reported by Louisiana 4-H Alumni that Completed the Zammit Social Media Questionnaire

Activity	SD	D	A	SA	N/A
Responding to event invitations on Facebook	4 12%	6 19%	12 38%	6 19%	4 12%
Commenting on others' photos or videos	3 10%	5 16%	13 42%	7 23%	3 10%
Viewing others' photos	1 3%	2 6%	15 47%	8 25%	6 19%
Playing games through social media	11 38%	3 10%	7 24%	4 14%	4 14%
Watching posted videos online	3 9%	3 9%	12 38%	9 28%	5 16%
Participating in discussion boards	7 22%	5 16%	10 31%	3 9%	7 22%
Viewing 4-H updates through social media	4 13%	0 0%	13 42%	11 35%	3 10%
Communicating with my 4-H agent through social media	3 9%	2 6%	15 47%	9 28%	3 9%
Being identified in 4-H photos or videos posted online	2 6%	2 6%	10 31%	13 41%	5 16%

Note: Percentage refers to percent of respondents who responded to each item. Percentages are rounded to the nearest %.

The respondents' preference of social media score was determined by a summation of the scores for each activity. The following scale was created by the researcher to aid in the interpretation of the responses: 1 – 1.75= strongly disagree, 1.76 – 2.50= disagree, 2.51 – 3.25= agree, and 3.26 – 4.00= strongly agree. As part of the analysis, the mean and standard deviation of the response to each activity item in the Zammit Social Media Questionnaire was calculated. The item that received the highest level of agreement from respondents was "I like viewing others' photos" with a mean 3.15 (SD= 0.73).

Table 11

Description of the Level of Agreement for Use of Social Media among Louisiana 4-H Alumni that Completed the Zammit Social Media Questionnaire

Zammit Social Media Questionnaire Items	n	M ^a	SD	Category ^b
I like responding to event invitations on Facebook	28	2.71	.97	A
I like commenting on others' photos or videos	28	2.86	.93	A
I like viewing others' photos	26	3.15	.73	A
I like playing games through social media	25	2.16	1.18	D
I like watching posted videos online	27	3.00	.96	A
I like participating in discussion boards	25	2.36	1.04	D
I like viewing 4-H updates through social media	28	3.11	.99	A
I like communicating with my 4-H agent through social media	29	3.03	.90	A
I like being identified in 4-H photos or videos posted online	28	3.25	.89	A

Note: Mean and Standard deviation are rounded to the nearest hundredth.

^a Response scale: 1 = strongly disagree (SD), 2 = disagree (D), 3 = agree (A), and 4 = strongly agree (SA)

^b Interpretive scale: 1 – 1.75= SD, 1.76 – 2.50= D, 2.51 – 3.25= A, and 3.26 – 4.00= SA

Discussions and Conclusions

The respondents to this study were predominantly white (77%), teenage adults (average age was 18-19 years), female (69%), lived in farm or rural areas (44%), were 4-H members for 9 years (38%), were 4-H Junior Leadership members for 0 years (25%), completed or enrolled in a 4-year college program (56%), and owned a desktop or laptop computer (91%). In general, the demographics of this study have similarities to the appearance of the Louisiana 4-H population. According to the 2010-2011 Louisiana 4-H State Report, a majority of 4-H members are Caucasian (57%) females (52.9%) (Fox, 2011). Whereas the study provides valuable information about the use and preferred method of social media among Louisiana 4-H alumni, the results present a challenge. The results of this study apply to a small percentage of the Louisiana 4-H population who are 18-19 years old, white, female, enrolled in a 4-year college program, and have vested membership in the 4-H program. The results of this study may not reflect the current use of social media among 13-15 year old Louisiana 4-H members. It is recommended that this study be conducted with a more general youth population, which may be diverse with regards to the demographic variables tested in this study.

The results of the study indicated that all (100%) of the 4-H alumni who participated in the study use some form of social media. A majority of the 4-H alumni in this study use Facebook (94%) and text messaging (81%), in which they use Facebook (78%) and text messaging (87%) at least 1-2 times per day. Facebook (33%) and text messaging (72%) were also among the top two ranked preferred methods of social media. The study also shows that 4-H alumni are generally not using MySpace (0%), Flickr (3%), Google Circles (6%), Discussion Boards (6%) and Blogs (12%). The top five social media tools that 4-H alumni are currently using are as follows: 1) Facebook (94%); 2) Text messaging (81%); 3) YouTube (50%); 4) Twitter (38%); 5) Pinterest (38%). The implication of these results is that teenage youth prefer to use Facebook and text messaging to any other type of social media. Another inference is that a majority of 4-H youth are not using the Louisiana 4-H Flickr page since only one respondent (3%) acknowledged use of Flickr. The recommendation is that this survey be administered to a more diverse population to confirm or adjust the results of the preferred method of social media

among Louisiana 4-H youth. Another recommendation is for the Louisiana 4-H program to explain its intended use for Flickr to 4-H youth or post pictures to a more accessible and used form of social media, such as Facebook. Louisiana 4-H agents could utilize popular social media methods, such as Facebook, text messaging, Twitter, and YouTube to capture the attention of its intended audience for promotional and educational purposes. Extension 4-H agents could make YouTube videos of educational 4-H events, such as "How to" videos for competing in contests, and post the videos to Facebook for 4-H youth and parents to view. Posting recognition videos and pictures also helps youth to feel a sense of belonging and potential members to gain an understanding of the 4-H Youth Development organization. By utilizing the social media tools that youth currently use and being proactive in using new forms of technology, 4-H agents will develop and partnership with youth by communicating with them through their preferred method of communication—social media.

The results of this study confirmed the belief that youth use social media for social interaction with friends. A majority of respondents indicated that the reason they use social media is as follows:

- 1) To communicate with family and/or friends (94%);
- 2) To become updated on friends' activities (75%);
- 3) To become updated on events (66%); and
- 4) To find people (old friends, classmates, etc.) (66%).

In addition to communicating with people, the study indicates that 4-H alumni also use social media to post and view pictures. When asked what attracts 4-H alumni to social media, a simple majority of respondents identified pictures (59%). A majority of respondents also indicated that they use Facebook to post pictures (81%) and to view pictures (72%). Posting pictures to the 4-H Facebook page (47%) was one of the main responses of surveyed participants. Participants also requested to post updated and current events to the 4-H Facebook page (59%). The recommendation is that the Louisiana 4-H Facebook page be linked to all parish 4-H Facebook pages. Another recommendation is for 4-H agents to begin or continue posting updated events, pictures, and recognition of 4-H members on social media websites, especially Facebook. Since youth view using social media as a primary form of communication, 4-H agents should be proactive in communicating with youth through social media. Extension agents can be proactive by posting upcoming events and recognizing 4-H youth through posting updates, pictures, and videos to social media websites.

The results of this survey indicated a need for an accurate and reliable Louisiana 4-H alumni database. The most recent 4-H alumni database included names and e-mail addresses for 4-H members who received the 2011 Louisiana 4-H Senior Honor Cord Award. The recommendation is for the Louisiana 4-H program to develop an updated 4-H alumni database that includes updated contact information including the name, e-mail address, mailing address, phone numbers, and parish of 4-H membership for each 4-H alumnus. Having an updated 4-H alumni database would provide the Louisiana 4-H program an opportunity to contact 4-H alumni to be volunteers, financial contributors, and research participants. Another recommendation is for the Louisiana 4-H program to encourage 4-H members to participate in 4-H-related surveys and questionnaires. It is also recommended that the Louisiana 4-H Program provide staff training on the importance of inputting accurate, updated contact information into the enrollment system. Another option for obtaining current information on 4-H alumni is to create a social media platform for 4-H alumni in addition to having email and mailing addresses for 4-H alumni. For example, Louisiana 4-H could establish a Facebook page for 4-H alumni, in which the Facebook page administrator could send information regarding being a volunteer, donor, or research

participant to all 4-H alumni on the site. Allowing parental access to inputting updated contact information in a 4-H enrollment system would be another possible option for collecting current data on 4-H members and 4-H alumni.

The results of this study may also be applicable to other youth development organizations. Youth are using social media at a rapid pace, so other youth organizations can use the results of this study to promote and educate youth in a way in which they receive information best—through social media.

References

Boyd, D. (2008). *Why Youth ♥ Social Network Sites: The Role of Networked Publics in Teenage Social Life*. (2008). Retrieved on November 7, 2011 from <http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/abs/10.1162/dmal.9780262524834.119>

Culnan, M.J., McHugh, P.J., & Zubillaga, J.I. (2010). How Large U.S. Companies can use Twitter and other social media to gain business value. *MIS Quarterly Executive*, 9(4), 243-259. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

Dictionary.com. Retrieved from <http://dictionary.reference.com>

Dillman, D.A. (2007). *Mail and Internet Surveys: The Tailored Design Method* (2nd ed.). Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons Inc.

Extension. (March 2010). Retrieved November 9, 2011 from <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/qlinks/extension.html>

Fox, J. (2011). *Louisiana 4-H Statistics 2010-2011*. (State Report). Louisiana State University, Louisiana 4-H Youth and Family Development.

Fuess, L.C. (2011). *An Analysis and Recommendations of the Use of Social Media within the Cooperative Extension System: Opportunities, Risks, and Barriers*. (Unpublished master's thesis). Cornell University, NY.

Hair, J.F., Black, W.C., Babin, B.J., Anderson, R.E., & Tatham, R.L. (2006). *Multivariate Data Analysis* (6th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Lenhart, A., Madden, M., Macgill, A., & Smith, A. (2007). *Teens and Social Media*. Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project. Retrieved from <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2007/Teens-and-Social-Media.aspx>

Louisiana 4-H: About 4-H. Retrieved on January 18, 2012 from www.lsuagcenter.com/en/4H/about_4H/

Merriam-Webster.com. Retrieved from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary>

National 4-H Council. (2011). About 4-H. Retrieved November 9, 2011 from <http://www.4-h.org/about/>

Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project. (2010). *Social Media and Young Adults*. Retrieved from <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Social-Media-and-Young-Adults.aspx>

Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project. (2011). *Teens, kindness and cruelty on social network sites*. Retrieved from <http://www.pewinternet.org/Press-Releases/2011/Teens-and-social-media.aspx>

Robideau, K. & Santl, K. (April 2011). *Strengthening 4-H Communications Through Technology*. Retrieved December 14, 2011 from <http://www1.cyfernet.org/FRConf2011/sc/2011-Robideau-Strengthen.pdf>

Skelly, J. (2005). Social Marketing: Meeting the Outreach Challenges of Today. *Journal of Extension*, 43, 1. Retrieved from <http://www.joe.org/joe/2005february/iw1.php>