Internship poster

Posted on September 27, 2013 by tak49@cornell.edu

On Tuesday, September 24, my fellow CCE interns and I had the privilege of presenting our summers’ work in poster format in front of Dean Mathios, and many other esteemed faculty, alumni, and staff. Attached is the digital copy of my poster.

Posted in Use of Social Media and Mobile Technology

Reflections on Diversity

Posted on August 13, 2013 by tak49@cornell.edu

Later today, I’ll be moderating my sixth and final focus group for this summer, and I’ll be finished with my internship by the end of this week. While I may continue to work with CCE on this research during the school year, one cannot help but reflect at this point.

Conducting focus groups has been the most enjoyable part of this experience by far. Each group had a different dynamic and was mad up of different individuals, all of whom were very informative and willing to participate in our focus group discussions. My focus groups thus far have included Jefferson, Erie, Monroe, St. Lawrence, and Tomkins Counties, with Orange County in the works. I have been all over upstate New York, and I have yet to meet a person who was not interesting.

Over the course of our six focus groups, I have seen a great diversity in participants. I have seen parents, grandparents, and teens, both male and female, black and white, talkative and quiet. Despite these differences, each individual contributed equally to our set of qualitative data thus far. Even the participants who weren’t very talkative were able to contribute to the discussion. If I asked a prompt about a type of social media that they were not incredibly passionate about, their silence was more than enough to inform me that this was the case.
This summer has been busy and full of learning opportunities. I feel very fortunate to have worked so closely with both quantitative and qualitative data, but I feel like the qualitative focus groups are what really made the experience special. Our participants have already given us so much useful information, and have really made this research possible.

Fun in the Field

Posted on July 15, 2013 by tak49@cornell.edu

We’ve been getting a lot of great quantitative data from all the surveys that we’ve been receiving. In fact, the survey count is 1100 and counting; that’s a ton of data. However, the quantitative data will only take us so far. If we really want to find out what avenue is best to stay in contact with class participants after they graduate, we’re going to have to talk to our target audience directly. There are just too many options (both in terms of social media and otherwise) to figure everything out with just multiple choice questions on a survey.

This is where our focus groups come in, the first of which was conducted in Jefferson County this past Friday the 12th. I moderated and Lua Wilkinson took notes. As we speak, I’m transcribing the audio recording into text, and identifying the finer details of the hour-long conversation.

Based on this conversation, we may need to consider options other than social media as well. This specific group seemed particularly interested in a monthly newsletter with nutrition information. About half the group would prefer an e-newsletter, and the other half only really used snail mail; however, it was promising to see that the entire group was enthusiastic about learning more about everything from cost-cutting tips to recipes and beyond.

We’ll be conducting more focus groups in Monroe and Niagara counties later this week, so there will be plenty more to blog about next week. Stay tuned!

Who knew data could be this interesting?

Posted on June 24, 2013 by tak49@cornell.edu
They’re just numbers on a page. They’re just cells in Microsoft Excel. What’s so interesting about that?

To start, the sheer quantity of data is staggering. I’m currently working with a table that’s 21 columns x 502 rows and counting. And that’s just the raw data; that doesn’t count the hundreds of cells that I’m using to turn a series of multiple choice survey questions into useful, workable quantities and percentages. These cells contain “countif” “countifs” and triple-nested “if” functions (to name a few) that ultimately result in values that measure the totals of every response to every question, as well as all of the responses cross-referenced with gender, and urban, suburban, and rural environments.

Even more interesting is what the numbers are telling us; this project has made lightyears of progress since the beginning of the summer and we have learned much from the survey data. For example, many of the researchers were expecting text messaging to be the most promising avenue for reaching our target audience because, as low-SES citizens, not all of them have access to computers, smartphones or internet, but most have at least a regular, “dumb” cell phone. While this is, in fact, the case, our survey data shows that there is little interest to receive information via text.

When asked, “Would you like to learn more about feeding yourself and your family by receiving text messages from Cornell Cooperative Extension?” only 35 people responded “Yes.” This data is represented by the left-hand portion of Figure 1 (shown here, at right) and is in stark contrast to the right-hand portion of Figure 1.

The right-hand side is based off the responses to the question, “Would you be interested in learning more about eating better for less?” where 95 respondents said “Yes.” There is clearly a disparity here between the respondents desire to learn and their desire (or lack thereof) to receive texts.

This is where some of the other social media comes into play, Facebook being the clear favorite. Anyone who asserts that Myspace is still widely used (regardless of SES) is probably getting their data from 2006. Out of all 163 surveys, 112 confirmed that they have a Facebook, and one sole respondent mentioned

— Figure 1, An Initial Survey Results Brief Graph
Myspace as part of his/her social media repertoire, but listed it among Facebook, Google+, and Twitter. In fact, there were 8 mentions of Twitter, 3 of Instagram, 2 of Tumblr, 7 of email, and Google+, Myspace, and LinkedIn all tied for last with one mention each.

One may wonder if our total possible outreach would be limited if we cut out texting entirely; this is a very valid question considering 139 respondents have cell phones as opposed to 112 with Facebook accounts. However, and I uncovered an interesting statistic when combining questions about computer access. People were asked if they have a smart phone, computer at home, or computer access elsewhere (via a workplace or library, for example) and while only 69, 102, and 125 individuals responded “Yes” to these questions, respectively, only 15 individuals responded “No” to all 3. This means that the number of people who do not have access to a computer is actually less than the 24 respondents who stated that they do not have a cell phone.

The next steps from here are to continue to collect surveys and monitor the data to make sure the results mentioned here to not change drastically. In addition, question preparation is to begin for focus groups, most likely delving deeper into internet-based (as opposed to text-message-based) social media. Logistically speaking, we will need to know how best to implement the preferred type/types of social media. Combining multiple social media avenues should increase our chances of reaching our target audience, but moving forward, Facebook should be our primary concern.

What does social media have to do with nutrition?

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Everything.

When low-SES parents participating in the Eat Smart New York or the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program graduate from their classes, what happens next? They are no longer able to attend classes as room must be made for new participants, but they still want to learn more. How do they stay connected to the latest recipes, healthy snack ideas, and cost-saving tips? Social media. It can provide the vital link between Cornell professionals and participants all over New York State.

In order to implement the use of social media in the most effective way possible, this project will analyze both quantitative survey data and qualitative focus group data as we narrow down the available social media options. The preliminary survey data will be used to generate and guide the questionnaire for the focus groups which will be conducted at 9 different locations, both upstate and down. After the notes and recordings of the focus groups have been transcribed and analyzed, hopefully, will be able to arrive at a single, mobile social media platform that will allow participants and educators alike to post, communicate, and share their ideas.