RURAL GROCERY STORES USE OF COMMUNICATION CHANNELS:
EXPLORATORY STUDY

by

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Abstract

This is an exploratory study looking at the communication channels used in the relationship between rural grocers and rural community members in four Kansas communities. The study is a continuation of research and efforts done by K-State's Rural Grocery Initiative to help the sustainability of rural grocery stores. This study is looked at through the theoretical lens of uses and gratifications because of the identification of communication channels that satisfy users' wants and needs.   The study is qualitative, using individual interviews to gather data from rural grocers and rural community members. Eight communication channels are identified by the grocers and community members: onsite of grocery store, newspaper (published in a nearby community), mail, radio, website, word-of-mouth, email, and Facebook. The eight communication channels discussed in the study are identified as being beneficial, used, or both by rural grocers and rural community members. The information provided from the study offers suggestions for rural grocers to better reach community members to increase business, and thus increase sustainability in the community.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

This exploratory study addresses the communication channels used in the relationship between grocers sending out information and community members receiving food and grocery information, such as weekly grocery specials and store promotions. The study focuses on discovering what communication channels are being used by each group.

Grocery stores in rural Kansas communities are being faced with the fear of closing due to the lack of population. To combat closure of rural Kansas grocery stores, the Center for Engagement and Community Development, Kansas Sampler Foundation, the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, grocery store owners in Kansas, and faculty and staff at Kansas State University have partnered to create the Rural Grocery Store Initiative ("Rural grocery store," 2012).

In Kansas from 2007 to 2010, 82 rural grocery stores were closed (Procter, 2012). To help communities fight this grocery store demise, the Rural Grocery Initiative is working on the following goals to create new sustainability models for rural grocery stores: increasing customer loyalty, implementing rural business ownership models, having rural businesses compete with large chain stores, providing alternative models of distribution to rural business owners, and finding best practices for minimum buying requirements ("Rural grocery store," 2012). Using effective promotions is critical for grocery stores to provide an efficient and profitable system (Mathews, 1995) because promotion and information help bring customers into the store, thus leading to sustainability.

Rural grocery stores are a vital part of a community as they provide nutrition and a healthy lifestyle for the community members ("Rural grocery store," 2012). Through the Rural Grocery Store Initiative, the Center for Engagement and Community Development and its

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partners are working on rural grocery preservation efforts for more than 175 grocery stores in rural communities ("Rural grocery store," 2012).

Statement of Problem

Communication efforts from rural groceries are important for providing community members information about available food. Community members may choose to shop outside the community if they are not informed of local store specials. A newspaper has been the most traditional uses for consumers when deciding which product to purchase (Ezell & Russell, 1985). However, in communities that do not have a newspaper, the patrons and grocer cannot reply upon that communication channel for grocery information and therefore need to have alternative communication channels to reach local residents.

The Rural Grocery Store Initiative has made efforts in several areas concerning rural grocery stores. These efforts include helping the grocers with food suppliers, food networks, best practices, and funding opportunities ("Rural grocery store," 2012). Understanding the best communication channels for rural community members to receive information from rural grocers could enhance sustainability. (Results from previous studies done by the Rural Grocery Store Initiative can be found in Appendix D and Appendix E.)

Grocery stores in rural communities may be using channels of communication that are not reaching the target audience. This study looks to address the communication channels used in the relationship between rural community members and rural grocers for food and grocery information.

Significance

The findings in this study are intended to provide an understanding of the best communication channels for rural community members to receive information from rural grocers about food and grocery availability. Rural grocers need to communicate through effective communication channels that are reaching rural community members. A disconnect in using available media channels to send and receive information regarding food and groceries availability may be why rural grocery stores are having difficulty with sustainability. Shaw (2006) found people need information regarding food when they are considering a purchase. One of the reasons communities may become food deserts is because of a lack of resources, and knowledge is one of these resources. Changes in the news consumption environment can be partly attributed to the growth of new formats made possible by technology such as blogs and social network sites (Siles & Boczkowski, 2012). This disconnect in using different communication channels to receive information about food and grocery availability could cause a grocery store to close in a rural community. Thus, the community may then become part of a food desert and lose part of its identity.

Grocery store advertising and newspapers have had a strong relationship in the past as they both rely on each other. Grocery store inserts and advertisements have customarily been a staple in newspapers (Hartnett 2000), and newspapers rely heavily on the advertising revenue (Siles & Boczkowski, 2012). Traditionally, readers have been drawn to newspaper food advertising because of bonus coupons, weekend specials, and food availability from different grocery stores (Schapker 1966). Grocery information is one of the top desired uses for the newspaper when the newspaper has been primarily used for making decisions. With the expansion of technology, print newspapers are having challenges staying in business due to

decreasing circulation and advertising revenue (Picard, 2008). Thus, the grocery may have trouble surviving in a community when the grocer is unable to get information out about food and grocery availability and must develop and rely on new communication channels.

Food is an important part of a person's health and livelihood. A food desert is an area where food outlets are not available, as compared with other communities (McEntee & Agyeman, 2010). A community in a food desert may find that its members have food availability restrictions, as they have to travel long distances to purchase nutritious food or buy less healthy food at convenience stores (Walker, Keane, & Burke, 2010). Low-income community members and/or those lacking transportation can become greatly affected by a food desert due to the lack of resources to acquire food (Walker, Keane, & Burke, 2010). A food desert may develop because members are unaware of what food is available to them. The food deserts may be reduced if messages about food and grocery were reaching community members through the communication channels the community members were using. Lack of information can attribute to a food desert (Shaw, 2006).

The purpose of this study is to identify current communication channels used in the relationship between rural grocers sending out information and community members receiving information about food and groceries. Identifying the channels that each group is using will hopefully help rural grocery stores better reach community members with food and grocery information to benefit both groups.

This study contributes to the Rural Grocery Store Initiative's sustainability goals by identifying the current communication channels used in the relationship between rural grocers sending out information and community members receiving information about food and

groceries. Grocers using the channels of communication that are being used by community members could improve the grocer's customer base and provide food for rural shoppers.

Organization

Chapter Two reviews the literature of the importance of grocery stores, access to food for community members, knowledge of food availability of community members, grocery store promotions, and mobile marketing. Chapter Two also describes uses and gratifications theory and its application to the identification of the communication channels to satisfy the users' wants and needs. Chapter Three discusses the study methodology. This chapter explains how participants were recruited, data were gathered, and how data were analyzed using grounded theory framework. Chapter Four reports the results of the shoppers' and grocers' interviews. Chapter Five explains the findings in accordance with the research questions, implications of this study on uses and gratifications theory, suggestions for new ways to communicate with rural community members for rural grocers, and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

This study addresses the relationship between rural grocers and rural community members sending and receiving food and grocery information in four small Kansas towns. The study explores the communication channels used between community members purchasing food and groceries and rural grocers sending out information about food and groceries. Rural grocery stores are an important part of rural communities in both commercial and social aspects.

This chapter reviews the main streams of literature relating to grocery stores and communication channels used in the relationship between grocers and community members. It also reviews the literature of rural retailing, grocery store importance, grocery store promotions, and the Kansas State University Rural Grocery Store Initiative.

Rural Retailing

Rural retailing can encompass many definitions and descriptions. Shuckssmith (1990) finds certain variables are key to defining rural retailing: population density, location in non-urban areas, and settlements below a particular population threshold.

Rural retailing is important for the quality of life of community members to obtain basic needs such as food and clothing (Lennon, et al., 2007). However, rural retailers have higher cost structures, small population size, and geographic isolation (Paddison & Calderwood, 2007).

According to Drabenstott and Smith (1996) the last few decades there has been consolidation of rural retailing, thus resulting in larger trade centers in larger towns. The consolidation results in a drastic reduction in the rural retailing entities rural because it limits rural community members' access to products (Lennon, et al., 2007).

Recently, rural retailing has had increased competition from a decreasing population, competition from nearby communities, and online and catalog shopping, thus making physical retail stores in small communities difficult to keep open (Wayland, Simpson, & Kemmerer, 2003).

McGee and Rubach (1996) looked at hostile environments of small independent retailers. A hostile environment is one in which there is a threat to the viability, used frequently in the use of competitive behavior (Davis, Moris, & Allen, 1991).   The study found that pricing was a key element to competitive behavior. This can be extremely difficult for small retailers to compete on, with the major competitor big box stores such as Wal-Mart in which uses low-prices as one of its marketing tactics (McGee & Rubach, 1996).

One type of rural retailing found in many small communities is the grocery retailing business. However, competition from big box grocery stores can also change how rural community members shop for groceries. When competitors like Wal-Mart are in or nearby a small community, many community members are enticed by larger varieties and lower prices that are available. This enticement could lead to rural community members not shopping at their local rural grocery store (Kurtzleben, 2012).

Grocery Shopper Habits

Rural community members have typically purchased "lower ordered" goods (groceries as an example) from local merchants, and larger purchases from nearby communities with larger trade areas (Seninger, 1978).

Thompson (1967) looked at the shopping habits of grocery store customers, finding that they could be divided three categories based on their grocery shopping habits: split-purchase shoppers, single-store shoppers, and shop-around shoppers. The single-store shoppers chose one

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store to purchase their food and grocery items.   Split-purchase shoppers chose to purchase food and grocery items at two or more stores based on store characteristics the shopper felt were important, while the shop-around shoppers varied where they purchased all different food and grocery items.

Many of the grocery stores in rural communities are smaller due to the population size the store is supporting (O'Brien, 2008), and thus may not be used as the main source of groceries for community members. Thompson's (1967) major conclusion was that shoppers primarily use smaller grocery stores for small, supplemental purchases, but use larger grocery stores for the majority of food shopping.

Rural communities have embedded markets when a relationship (in addition to the economic relationship) of a social nature exists between consumers and retailers (Miller & Kean, 1997). Studies have found that economic, social, and moral motivations can guide an individual's behavior (Allport, 1961; Maslow, 1970). Miller and Kean (1997) found that marketing strategies for rural retailing should focus on interpersonal and moral motivations that are typically not focused on at larger stores. A competitive edge suggested in the study was to use intangible entities such as greetings and personalized services targeted to the customers.

According to Wayland, Simpson, and Kemmerer (2003) outshopping has always presented a threat to rural retailers. Outshopping is the practice of going outside the local retail market to purchase and shop (Hawes & Lumpkin, 1984). However, technology is adding to the threat of outshopping with online shopping and the continued use of catalogue purchasing. The threat of outshopping for rural retailers provides convenience to rural community members to be able to purchase items 24 hours a day, compare prices, and select from a large variety (Wayland, Simpson, & Kemmerer, 2003).

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Grocery Store Importance

The grocery store is an important part of rural communities (Bailey, 2010). Local groceries can be community builders, social meeting places, and create important economic capitol in a community (Bailey, 2010). When a rural grocery store closes, negative implications for the community can include declining population, economic downfall for other businesses in the community, and unhealthy eating habits for community members (Bailey, 2010). Another negative implication of the demise of a grocery store is the loss of a social element, such as a meeting place to communicate with others in the community.

Importance of Rural Grocery as a Social Community Element

Thornburg (2007) looked at four villages in Jefferson County, Kansas and found that as community members did more shopping in cities they were contributing to the decline of rural businesses.   By shopping locally residents reasoned they were contributing to the rural market in the local community. Rural businesses are important because as the businesses disappear in communities, the social networks also weaken because those businesses are also meeting places and a hub for communication.

Food Deserts

Rural groceries are important to rural communities by providing community members with resources and access to healthy food that can lead to a healthy diet, (Larson, Storey, & Nelson, 2009) support that community's economy (Bailey, 2010), and provide a social element (Thornburg, 2007).

When a rural grocery store closes the community members may be qualified as being in a food desert ("Food deserts," 2012). A food desert is an area where food outlets are not available

(McEntee & Agyeman, 2010). Studies have shown that both low-income status and low access to supermarkets are both criteria for individuals to be living in a food desert ("Food deserts," 2012) (Kowaleski-Jones et al., 2009). The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines a rural food desert as being 10 miles or more from a supermarket. Defining a person as living in a food desert includes several factors, including personal preference of the individual's food selection, transportation methods the individual has access to, and availability of food (Hallett & McDermott, 2011). Food deserts can be located in both rural and urban communities according to the USDA's online Food Desert Locator (Weeks, 2012).

Literature regarding food deserts has primarily focused around four major research areas: supermarket access, socioeconomics, chain and non-chain supermarkets, and ethnic and racial disparities (Walker, Keane, & Burke, 2010). Literature on food deserts in the United States focuses around the lack of access to supermarkets, thus limiting the availability of healthy and nutritious food and leading to poor diet-related health (Walker, Keane, & Burke, 2010).

Food deserts are becoming more prevalent as grocery stores are going out of business. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 23.5 million Americans live in food deserts, with 13.5 million being low income. Americans living in rural food deserts total 2.3 million ("Food deserts," 2012).

The decreasing population of rural America is making it harder for grocery stores to sustain themselves in small rural communities, as a certain population minimum is needed to maintain a grocery store (Bailey, 2010). In 2005, the required population to maintain a grocery store was 3,242 (O'Brien, 2008). In 1960, 30% of Americans lived in rural areas, but in 2010 only 16% lived in rural areas (Mertens, 2011). Communities without grocery stores are finding that newer families are not as likely to move into their areas as compared with towns that have a

grocery store (Bailey, 2010). Families are less likely to move into a community without a

grocery store because purchasing food would have to be done elsewhere (Bailey, 2010). The

Great Plains has the largest concentration of counties that the USDA classifies as "low access"

areas (see figure 1) where more than half of the population lives 10 or more miles from a grocery

store (Morton, 2007). According to Figure 1 more than a quarter of Kansas counties have 50%

or more of the population who lack access to a supermarket.

Figure 1

Food Deserts
Counties lacking convenient access to supermarkets by U.S. county in 2000

Percent Lacking Access
Less than half
50% or more
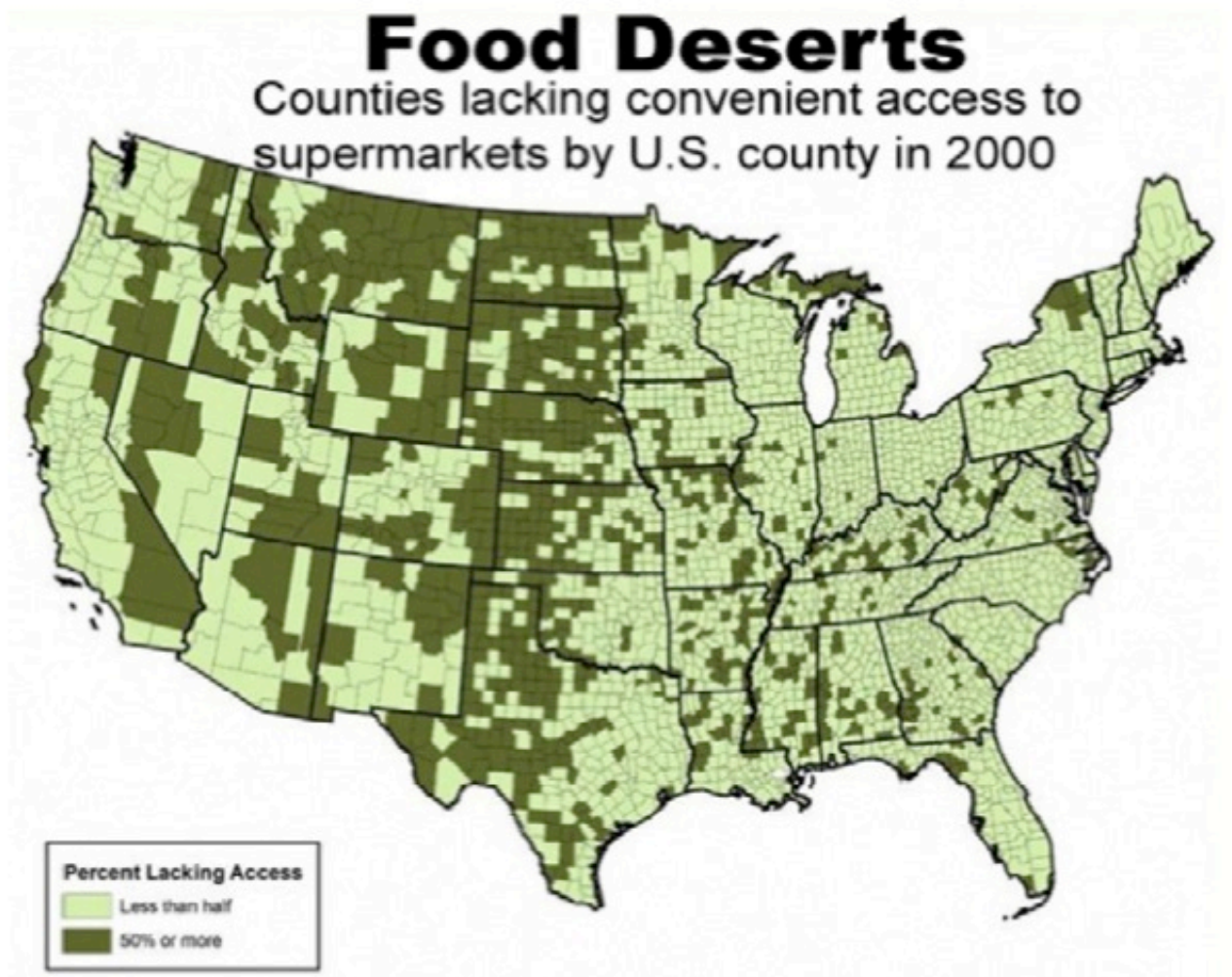
(Procter, 2010)

Nutrition

Research shows a relationship between an individual's health and access to food (Larson, Storey, & Nelson, 2009). Many studies focus on the availability of healthy foods being a major factor in an individual's diet (Morland,Wing, Diez, & Poole, 2002). Studies have found that the root of poor health can be attributed to a lack of healthy food availability, lack of access to health care, food, and exposure to environmental hazards (Braunstein & Lavizzo-Mourey, 2011). A study from the University of Connecticut's Food Marketing Policy Center showed neighborhoods that had an absence of a supermarket had a greater occurrence of diet related poor health (Cotterill & Franklin, 1995).

Food deserts and good nutrition are starting to become a major health issue. First Lady Michelle Obama has campaigned against childhood obesity and she has stressed the importance of healthy foods (Thomson, 2011). Mrs. Obama announced in 2010 a $400 million Healthy Food Financing Initiative that focused on food desert elimination by the year 2017 (Food deserts, 2011).

The USDA has linked food deserts to a growing weight problem among the population, which has contributed to childhood obesity and has tripled since 1980 in America (Food deserts, 2011). The lack of access to healthy food can result in higher chances of obesity and other diet related diseases, such as heart disease and diabetes ("Food deserts," 2012), which cost America more than $150 billion annually for treatments (Food deserts, 2011). Dieticians recommend fresh vegetables and fruit, but some people lack access to these healthy foods (Shaw, 2006) which are associated with healthy diets (Cheadle, Psaty, & Curry, 1991). With communication channels that reach community members about food and grocery information more communities

will have more information (Shaw, 2006), which will hopefully contribute to customers shopping at their local grocery store to find healthy foods.

Resources / Access

Shaw (2006) proposes that having access to food involves three contributing factors: attitude, asset, and ability. Attitude is the individual's state of mind that does not allow him or her to purchase foods (Shaw, 2006). Ability is anything that prevents an individual physically from purchasing what he or she wants to buy (Shaw, 2006). Lastly, assets are defined as a financial means to obtain food, whether that is for the food or transportation (Shaw, 2006). The study by Shaw looks at the different types of resources needed to access food, which include physical capabilities, financial resources, and knowledge of food availability.

Knowledge of Food Availability

Knowledge of food availability relates to the communication channels that community members are using to receive information. If grocers are not using the same communication channels to send information about food availability as the community members are using to receive the it, then community members do not have one of the resources they need to access food (Shaw, 2006). A disconnect may become present when different communication channels are being used by rural grocers and rural community members. As a result of this disconnect, rural grocery stores may become at risk of closing due to community members not knowing about the rural grocery store (Shaw, 2006). Therefore, the communication channels being used between rural grocers and community members are important resources for helping community members have food availability information.

Financial

Financial resources can limit an individual's transportation to the grocery store, cost of food, or even in terms of "virtual travel," where the individual orders food online (Shaw, 2006). Studies of rural community members having transportation problems in reaching a local grocery store were examined in the 1970s in the UK (Shaw, 2006). Early research showed that women who were widowed found themselves not having access to food, as they had never learned how to operate a vehicle (Shaw, 2006).

Residents who lack transportation are limited in the types and amounts of food they can purchase (Shaw, 2006). Access to supermarkets has been shown to be lower in low-income neighborhoods as there are 30 percent fewer supermarkets in low-income neighborhoods than in higher income neighborhoods (Weinburg, 1995). Low-income neighborhoods are also faced with the difficulty of affording transportation to obtain food when a supermarket is not located nearby (Rose & Richards, 2004). With a lack of transportation, there has been a lack of healthy food options, which can lead to diet-related diseases and an overall poorer diet (Ver Ploeg, 2010).

What's Being Done

Food deserts and healthy eating are gaining publicity (Thomson, 2011) and programs are being developed to help sustain grocery stores and support healthy diets. In 2008, Congress allocated resources to the U.S. Department of Agriculture to study the lack of access to healthy foods (Weeks, 2012).

Other initiatives are in place to continue the efforts for grocery store sustainability to help combat food deserts. Included are the Kansas State University Rural Grocery Initiative, Garden On The Go, Pennsylvania's Fresh Food Financing Initiative, and virtual grocery stores ("Rural

grocery store," 2012; Howell, 2012; States Water Food Deserts, 2010). However, these programs and initiatives do not specifically focus on the communication channels between rural grocers and community members regarding food and grocery availability information, but rather the business models and the access of food.

Grocery Store Promotions

Traditionally grocery store inserts and advertisements in newspapers have been very popular, and one of the main promotional avenues for grocery stores (Hartnett, 2000). Readers of the traditional print newspaper could find food advertisements, weekend specials, and bonus coupons (Schapker, 1966) to help make their grocery purchase decisions (Larkin & Grotta, 1977). Crosier (1983) suggested consumers use advertising for seven different kinds of satisfaction: post-purchase reassurance, remote experience, involvement, implied warranty, namely product information, entertainment, and value added to the brand.

Studies specifically looking at grocery store promotions have looked at the tactics and strategies of overall grocery promotion to help sustain grocery stores and help community members obtain the benefits grocery stores have to offer. Glanz and Yaroch (2004) looked at the strategies of increasing fruits and vegetables in a person's diet to become healthier. Through the study Glanz and Yaroch identified four ways grocery stores have intervened to contribute to people having a healthier diet and better health: promotion and advertising, increased convenience, variety, and availability of healthier foods, point-of-purchase information, and coupons and reduction in pricing. The study found that promotion was important to help grocery stores promote healthier food availability to contribute to healthier diets.

Advertising by the American food and alcohol industry (food manufacturers, foodservice, retailers) makes up close to 16 percent of the media advertising market ($73 billion) (Gallo,

1997). The portion of food advertising is due to the large market (having many entities involved from producer to maker to manufacturer), food being a highly branded item, and food being a repeat-purchase item (Gallo, 1997).

Newspaper Advertising

Grocery store advertising and newspapers have had a strong relationship in the past. Traditionally, newspapers were the main avenues of promotion for grocery stores (Hartnett, 2000), and the grocery advertisements were a main source of revenue for newspapers (Siles & Boczkowski, 2012).

Print community newspapers have historically been important to rural communities. Traditionally the community newspaper has been important to rural community members, as it was the source of information that was relevant to that area (Garfrerick, 2010). A survey done by the Scripps Survey Research Center and Scripps Howard Newspapers shows people in smaller communities read newspapers more than people in larger communities and cities (Hargrove, Miller, & Stempel, 2011); therefore rural community members use the community newspapers as an important communication channel for information.

The loss of a local rural newspaper can leave the community with the difficulty of getting information out to the public. A study conducted in Humboldt, Kansas after the community lost its community newspaper found that this demise left the religious, school, and civic leaders with the task of getting information out other than the traditionally used community newspaper. The study also found that residents reported local advertising was a facet in the community that was highly missed (Smethers et al., 2006).

Grocery store Hoang (2009) describes the newspaper as being a connecting factor between stores. The newspaper has a strong relationship with grocery stores. Wednesday is one

of the biggest advertising days for newspapers since supermarkets traditionally distribute weekly inserts and advertisements in the middle of the week (Hoang, 2009). However, with newspapers have experienced difficulties due to the Internet taking away traditional sources of advertising revenue (Siles & Boczkowski, 2012).

Mobile Marketing

Mobile marketing refers to goods or services being marketing through mobile technology (Hosbond & Skov, 2007). Mobile marketing can include the communication for customer retention and advertising used through communication channels of wireless devices and networks (Ye, 2007).

With mobile marketing increasing, usability is becoming crucial for easy interaction for consumers with the new technology (Hosbond & Skov, 2007). Mobile marketing is becoming important, as consumers are shopping more online than before due to convenience and large product selection provided by online shopping (Wayland, Simpson, & Kemmerer, 2003). Neilson's 2011 'Shopper trends report!' shows the only category of shopping that has increased is online (The Changing Face of the Grocery Buyer, 2012).

A 2005 study done on mobile marketing found that consumers want mobile marketing channels that are usable, but not disruptive of other and more important aspects to their lives, such as communicating with friends and family (Facchetti, Rangone, Renga, & Savoldelli, 2005). The study found that the success of mobile marketing depended on the context of the message and the consumer being provided the right information at the right time and right place. Issues of permission and disturbance of mobile marketing are also issues with consumers using mobile marketing channels (Hosbond & Skov, 2007). Consumers also do not want information through mobile marketing to be sent to them without their consent (Hosbond & Skov, 2007).

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Grocery Store Mobile Promotions

Grocery store mobile marketing has been used by several businesses due to the consumer demand. The "Mobile Shopping Survey Series, Part 2: CPG Shopping Behavior" study found that 58% of smartphone owners base their purchasing decisions at the grocery store on promotions and best values (AisleBuyer, 2012). Therefore, companies are trying to communicate with the through communication channels the consumer is already using.

An example of a grocery store mobile marketing company is Single Touch Systems Inc. Single Touch Systems Inc. launched ASDA Stores Ltd's mobile-based Grocery Delivery Notification Program based in Jersey City, NJ (Single Touch, 2011). The program notifies consumers when food has arrived, is going to be late, or will not be available.

The grocery retailing business is expected to increase usage of social media for promotion in the next five years. Valassis (media and marketing service firm) surveyed grocery retail executives in March 2012 on their current and expected use of media (see Figure 2). However, grocery retailer executives foresee the expected use of print media for grocery retailers to decline (EMarketer, 2012).   The change in marketing strategy for these grocery retail executives was in part due to the lower newspaper circulation (EMarketer, 2012). Figure 2 shows print media for grocery retailing is expected to decline, while social media use is expected to increase in the next five years.

Figure 2

Expected Use of Select Media According to US Grocery Retail Executives, March 2012
% of respondents

Print
75%
17%

Social internet
12%
65%

Broadcast
7%
3%

■ 2012   ■ In the next 5 years

Source: Valassis, "Supermarket Media Usage Study," July 9, 2012
143473   www.**eMarketer**.com
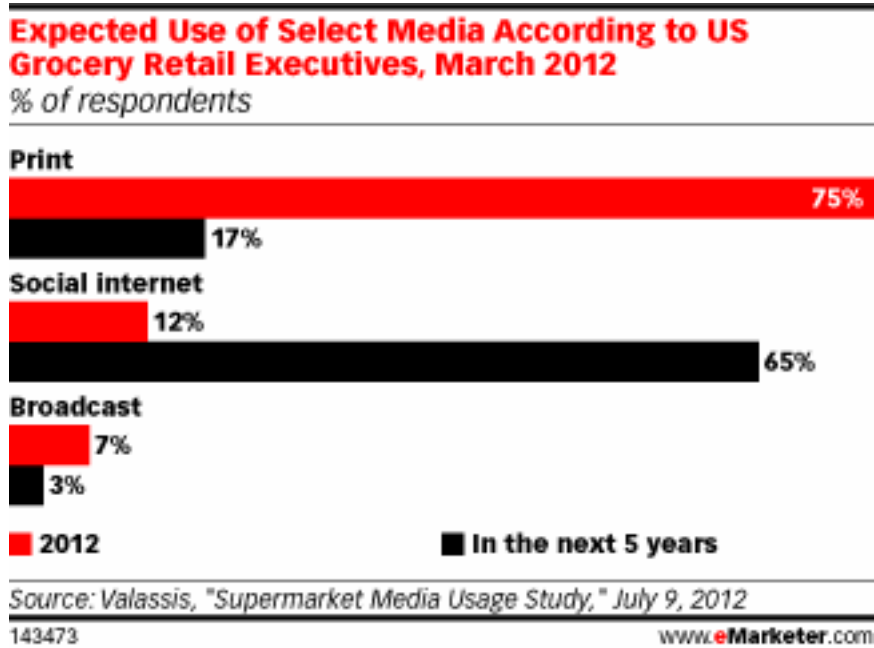
(EMarketer, 2012)

Rural community members are beginning to take advantage of the technology as the widespread rural areas are beginning to have supported network infrastructures (Hosbond & Skov, 2007).   With this infrastructure, rural residents are able to get Internet, email, social media (Facebook, Twitter), and vast amounts of information including weather and grocery advertisements. In Kansas, the state Board of Regents established Kan-Ed, a program that works to provide school, libraries, and hospitals with high-speed Internet access (Burris).

Gilbert, Karahalios, and Sandvig (2008) found rural people use social media differently than urban community members. Rural community members were found to have fewer friends and higher privacy settings. The study also found that rural people have trouble establishing trust with people who are not local. Looking directly at rural Kansans' use of Internet, Wilson

and Boone (1999) surveyed the Internet use in rural Kansas among community leaders and found that business executives were most likely (out of community leaders) to use the Internet.

The Rural Grocery Store Initiative

The Rural Grocery Store Initiative was created to help combat the closure of rural Kansas grocery stores through a partnership with the Center for Engagement and Community Development, Kansas Sampler Foundation, the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, grocery store owners in Kansas, and faculty and staff at Kansas State University ("Rural grocery store," 2012).

Rural grocery stores are a vital part of a community as they provide nutrition and a healthy lifestyle for the community members ("Rural grocery store," 2012). Through the Rural Grocery Store Initiative, the Center for Engagement and Community Development and its partners are working on rural grocery preservation efforts for more than 175 grocery stores in rural communities ("Rural grocery store," 2012).

The Rural Grocery Store Initiative is working on the following goals to create new sustainability models for rural grocery stores: increasing customer loyalty, implementing rural business ownership models, having rural businesses compete with large chain stores, providing alternative models of distribution to rural business owners, and finding best practices for minimum buying requirements ("Rural grocery store," 2012).

The Rural Grocery Store Initiative has sponsored a series of studies exploring the topic of rural grocery store sustainability. In 2008 surveys were sent to all postal patrons in five rural Kansas communities (Survey, 2008). These five rural Kansas communities were chosen due to cooperation with the grocery stores in those communities (Survey, 2008). The surveys were designed to provide a description of the average rural grocery store customer (see appendix E)

(Survey, 2008). The information from the surveys was designed to gather information from the customers about the individual grocery stores that were then provided to the local grocery stores (Survey, 2008).

In the survey grocers were asked what marketing strategies they were using that were effective in drawing in customers. The results showed that 76.2% of the grocery store owners chose fliers or inserts, followed by word-of-mouth with 59.5%, newspapers with 46.4%, promotions with 40.5%, radio with 26.2%, other with 13.1%, Internet or World Wide Web at 8.3%, and television at 7.1% (see appendix D results of all surveys) (Survey, 2008).

Also in 2008 surveys were sent to 201 rural Kansas grocers. This survey was designed to document the variety of challenges rural grocery stores were facing, determine the marketing practices used by the grocers, examine the supply and market the rural grocers were facing, contribute to the information-sharing network for rural grocery stores in Kansas, and detail the best practices rural grocers were using (see appendix D) (Survey, 2008). The research conducted by the Rural Grocery Store Initiative provided nine primary challenges that rural grocers were facing. These nine challenges included: high taxes, high utility costs, quantity and quality labor, sales volume, most appropriate ownership/management plan, larger grocery stores, minimum buying requirements (Survey, 2008).

Theoretical Framework:

This study explores the relationship among communication channels, community members, and rural groceries regarding food and grocery information by using the uses and gratifications theory. This theory is applicable because of the identification of communication channels that satisfy users' wants and needs. To be effective grocers (from the recipient's point of view) need to send out messages to consumers that will reach the community members at a

time when they are making food and grocery decisions. Similarity community members need information through channels they consider beneficial when making food and grocery buying decisions.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

Uses and gratifications is one of the dominant paradigms for explaining media in communication studies (LaRose, Mastro, & Eastin, 2001). Uses and gratifications theory has three underlying objectives: to identify how individuals use mass communications to fulfill their needs, to identify consequences of media use by the individual, and to identify the reasons for media use by the individual (McQuail, 2001). In this study uses and gratifications theory seeks to explain the use of communication channels for food and grocery information through the relationship of rural grocers and rural community members.

Uses and gratifications theory suggests that individuals use media to achieve gratification (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). Uses and gratifications theory focuses on an active audience or consumer, instead of the message that is being communicated (Katz, 1959). The question uses and gratifications theory poses is what are people doing with media (Katz, 1959).

Katz, Gurevitch, and Haas (1973) developed five categories of needs that show how people either connect or disconnect with types of media: cognitive, personal integrative, tension release, affective, and social integrative. Cognitive needs refer to acquiring and understanding or knowledge from the media, personal integrative needs refer to the stability or credibility of the media, tension release needs refer to escapism or diversion from reality through media, affective needs refer to the pleasure or feelings from media, social integrative needs refer to interaction with friends, family, and others through media (Katz, Gurevitch, & Haas, 1973).

Two of Katz, Gurevitch and Haas's (1973) five categories directly relate to this study. Cognitive needs relate to consumers receiving knowledge and understanding of the grocery store and more specifically the food and products the grocery store has to offer. The second category is social integrative needs where both the grocer and community members use the communication channels to connect with others. This connection could involve sustaining or developing a relationship through the communication channel.

Related Studies

Previous studies have used uses and gratifications theory to look at media use through different types of communication channels from newspapers to online media platforms, which has been used to provide a theoretical approach to new mass communications media, such as the Internet (Ruggiero, 2000).

Leung and Wei (2000) focused on the uses and gratifications of cell phone use. The study showed that instrumentality, urgency, and mobility were strong uses that predicted cell phone use. Mobility and immediate access were gratifications leading to use of cell phones on cars, trains, busses, and in malls and restaurants.

Social networking sites are virtual areas where people can communicate, discuss, and share with others in a specific population. Raacke and Bondes-Raacke (2008) looked at the different reasons for social network use and nonuse in college students. Main uses were to keep in contact with old friends, to keep in contact with present friends, to find old friends, and to post/look at photos. The study also looked at the main reasons for nonuse: no desire to have an account and too busy.

Another study looking into how uses and gratifications has been applied to communication channels was done by T. Stafford and M. Stafford (2004). The results from the

study related the Internet to three dimensions of use: social gratification, content gratification, and process gratification. Previous Internet content studies have typically been focused around entertainment. However, T Stafford and M. Stafford's (2004) study showed a significant amount of Internet content served for learning and information goals instead of online commerce, which is what the consumers were looking for.

The T. Stafford and M. Stafford (2004) study also looked at Internet as a shopping venue. The results from the study showed that even though the Internet is a shopping venue, there is still a need for a basic delivery of information that needs to be taken into consideration when designing a website. Information delivery needs to provide essential knowledge that people would looking for when using a website before actual buying occurs.

A qualitative study by O'Donohoe (1994) addresses what consumers do with advertising instead of what advertising does to consumers. O'Donohoe's study used participants 18-24 years of age, and the findings from the study showed participants primarily used advertising for information about products. Other key findings, included respondents favoring and welcoming advertising that showed something familiar to their own lives, reinforced attitudes and values, and enhanced interpersonal use with peers and family (O'Donohoe, 1994).

Other applications of uses and gratifications theory have been shown in studies regarding different types of media including the uses of text messaging by students (Grellhesl & Punyanunt-Carter, 2012), adoption of social networking sites (Pai &Arnott, 2013), and the uses and gratifications of talent-based reality television (Barton, 2013).

Overall, uses and gratifications theory is relevant to this study by seeking to explain the communication channels used in the relationship between rural grocers and rural community members to send and receive food and grocery information.

This study proposes to expand and contribute to the current research done by the Rural Grocery Store Initiative by looking at the communication channels used by both rural grocers and rural community members. The Rural Grocery Store Initiative survey sent to postal patrons looked at what marketing strategies were being used and were perceived as effective from a grocer's standpoint. This study looks at the communication channels between rural community members and rural grocers. Also, since this study is exploratory, using individual interviews, communication channels identified by the community members and grocers provides a more detailed explanation of individual's interpretations, experiences, and idiosyncrasies (Burns, 1989).

Research Questions

The research questions were designed to identify the communication channels used in the relationship between rural grocers and rural community members for food and grocery information.

RQ1: Exploration of rural community members' use and identification of communication channels as an information source for food and grocery information.

RQ2: Exploration of grocers' use of communication channels to inform customers about food and grocery information.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Study Plan Summary

The study uses qualitative individual interviews with community members and grocers. in four rural communities in Kansas with a grocery store, and there is no newspaper. The towns selected have a population of 2000 or less, based on identification by The Center of Engagement and Community Development and partners of Kansas towns of the same size, since this study is a continuation of the research previously done in efforts for the Rural Grocery Store Initiative ("Rural grocery store," 2010).   The study looks at the communication channels used in the relationship between rural grocers and rural community members for food and grocery information.

Participants: Community Members

Participants for the study are community members in four towns in Kansas (Town A, Town B, Town C, and Town D) that have a grocery store. Three participants and one grocer from each community were interviewed totaling 12 community members and four grocers.

Convenience sampling was used, with help from county extension offices providing the names and contact information of local community residents.   All participants were a representation of the already small population being studied (Sousa et al., 2004). The qualifications for both the towns being studied and participants being interviewed were more specific than interviewing people out of the general population. The four towns in the study have a population of less than 2000, have a grocery store, and do not have a newspaper published in that community.

Participants met the following qualifications:

1. More than 18 years of age.

2. Live in the local rural community in Kansas, and were of the community newspaper's circulation reach when the newspaper was in existence.

3. Buy majority of (more than 50%) groceries for themselves or family regularly.

The participants represent a small portion of the overall population. The data for the study was not quantitative; therefore not meeting the requirements for statistical inference or generalization of results about the population (Sousa et al, 2004). The major criticism of convenience sampling is using a sample that has a direct connection and strong feelings about the topic being studied (Moore, 2001). Community members were not chosen from a group with known strong feelings or strong associations about rural grocery store communication channels. The sample from this study was recruited with help from the county extension departments, which recruited participants out of personal and professional association based on the qualifications for the participants in the study, not due to associations with food and grocery and/or communication channels.

Participants: Grocers

As previously stated, four grocers in the four towns in Kansas were also interviewed. The qualification for the "grocers" was to be the person in charge of the promotional efforts for the grocery store. Many small business owners wear many "hats" due to the greater amount of responsibilities and tasks a small business owner has (Liu, 2013). Rural grocery store owners are no exception. The owner or manager may be the one who is in charge of doing the promotions as well as many other different tasks, unlike in larger grocery stores or grocery store chains

where one person or a team is dedicated to the promotions. Grocery stores also had to be located in a rural community in Kansas that does not have a local newspaper.

Data Collection Method

The method of data collection used in this study was two types of interviews each composed of a set of questions. One set of questions was for rural community members and the other for rural grocers. Questions were administered through telephone interviews with both community members and grocers. A follow-up on-site, in-person interview was requested from all rural grocery stores, however, only one allowed to conduct a follow-up interview on location at the rural grocery store.

Main Questions for Community Members

The set of questions for community members was constructed to answer research question 1: What communication channels are rural community members receiving grocery information through?

Question one, "Where do you buy your groceries?" was constructed to find where community members were purchasing groceries locally (grocery store closest in distance to the community member's residence) or non-locally (all other grocery stores excluding the local grocery store). The question was constructed to see which grocery store each community member was using to purchase groceries and which grocery store his or her grocery information was coming from. The question was also based from previous surveys created by staff in Agricultural Economics at K-State, with cooperation from the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, the Kansas Sampler Foundation, and the participating rural grocery store

owners and CECD staff ("Rural grocery store," 2012). Results from surveys are in Appendices D and E.

Question two, "How do you find out about what groceries are available?" was constructed to find what communication channels community members were currently using to receive food and grocery information in communities without a local newspaper. The question was constructed from a study by Larkin and Grotta stating grocery information had traditionally been one of the most desired uses for reading the newspaper (1977). Since a newspaper is not being published in each of the four communities being studied, the question arises about which communication channels the community members are receiving their food and grocery information.

Question three, "What would be the most beneficial way for you to receive information about your shopping area?" was constructed to find what communication channels the community members "want" receive information, and what communication channels they deem beneficial. This question was developed to provide an understanding for rural grocers of what media sources customers would prefer. The identification of the "wanted" use of communication channels from grocers to community members may help achieve one of the Rural Grocery Store Initiative's goals of increasing customer loyalty by increasing communication flow with customers ("Rural grocery store," 2012). If customers are satisfied frequently with their experience, which includes how they receive the information from the grocers, the grocery store is more likely to have customer loyalty (Esbjerg, Jensen et al. 2012).

Question three was also developed to see if community members were other media than the traditional print newspaper. Mobile marketing is becoming widely accessible and inexpensive and more good and products are being marketed through mobile means (Hosbond &

Skov, 2007).   Community members who are dependent on other communication channels than the ones they are receiving their food and grocery information through, may deem newer forms of communication as beneficial. Thus, question three was also developed to determine the dependence and perceived benefit of other non-traditional media sources (Ball-Rokeach, 1998).

Question four was similar to question three, but the researcher listed a type of communication channel, asking the community member if it was beneficial or not. The media types listed by the researcher were chosen based on identification as common or widespread sources in consumer media use (Mulhern 2009). The communication channels listed were: traditional media (newspaper, radio), Internet (store's website, social media, etc.), word-of-mouth, and other.

Main Questions for Grocers

The set of questions for grocers was constructed to answer research question 2: What communication channels are rural grocers using to promote their grocery stores?

Question one, "How are you reaching your customers?" was developed to identify the communication channels grocers are using to send food and grocery information. Since traditionally the print newspaper has been one of the main communication channels for grocery store promotion (Hartnett, 2000), and each of the four towns being studied does not have a local newspaper being published in the town, the information about how grocers are reaching their customers is a valid question.

Question two, " Where do you think the community members are getting information about your store?" was constructed to find out the grocers' perceptions to see if the communication channels they were using to send grocery information were effective in reaching

their customers and were the same communication channels the community members were using.

Question three, "How have your promotions changed over the years?" was constructed to find the adaption of communication channels by grocers after the local newspaper went out of business, or if there was any adaption.

Follow-Up Interview

The follow-up interview consisted of the researcher going to the rural grocery store and talking with employees, and interviewing the manager and owner of Town D. The questions for this interview were constructed to gather a more in-depth understanding of the relationship between the rural grocer and rural community members. Data discovered through this interview consisted of knowledge of competition, view of grocer as a communicator, which was brought to the researcher's attention through initial interviews with grocers and community members, types of promotions and communication channels being used, and importance of the grocery store in the community.

The importance of a grocery store has been identified in by Bailey (2010), however, the researcher wanted to see first-hand how important the grocery store was to the grocer, grocery store employees, and the community members.

Justification for Individual Interviews

When conducting research using grounded theory all qualitative methods can be used. However, individual interviews were chosen for this study due to their nature of being timely, flexible, and providing great detail of information (Britten, 1995). Individual interviews were chosen due to the feedback being based on experiences that occurred individually or not as a

large group, which was the way the consumer received grocery and food information (Hagglund, 2009).

Since the study was exploratory, individual interviews were used to gain information from grocers and community members. The study was necessary in order to ascertain media use by rural grocers and community members in Kansas, since this variable has not been looked at by the Rural Grocery Store Initiative in the efforts to support rural grocery store sustainability ("Rural grocery store," 2010).

Procedure

The local extension offices within each of the four communities were contacted for help gaining community members' names, contact information, and cooperation. Interviews were conducted by telephone.

Individual interviews with the grocers were conducted in the same week as the community member interviews. The interviews ranged from approximately 15 to 23 minutes each. It is noted that the length of the interviews was short. According to a study by Annie Irvine, telephone interviews many times end up being shorter than the same interview would be face-to-face (2011). The shorter duration of the interviews in Irvine's (2011) study was found to be caused by the participant saying less than equal or proportional talk from both parties (researcher and participant). The follow-up face-to-face interview lasted approximately 45 minutes.

Analysis

Glaser and Strauss developed grounded theory in 1967 (Glaser & Strauss, 1976). Grounded theory is a qualitative research method that seeks to develop an inductively grounded

theory using a systematic set of procedures (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Grounded theory was used to collect and conduct preliminary analysis of data in the current study, as grounded theory is an exploratory research method (Stebbins, 2001). The focus of grounded theory framework is the discovery of categories and the relationships among them (Glaser & Strauss, 1976). The current study looks at the different communication channels (categories) and the relationship between how they are used by rural grocers and rural community members.

Within grounded theory there are three coding types: open, axial, and selective. Open coding, which was used in analyzing the data of the current study, is the analysis of categorizing, describing, naming, and identifying themes found in the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Open coding was selected for the current study to have concepts emerge from raw data. A coding sheet was established (See Appendix C). The types of communication channels being used by rural grocers and rural communication members has not been established, therefore the data (feedback from interviews) needed to be categorized to find the concepts (Allan, 2003).

Interviews were recorded phone calls and one in-person interview. The interviews were transcribed and then coded for key words and phrases using the sociological method of grounded theory. (Key words can be found in the coding sheet in Appendix C). The coding sheet provided the guidelines for coding the transcripts.

The answers to the questions received from the community members and the grocers were coded by the one researcher. Since the content being coded was manifest content as outlined by Babbie (2010). The code sheet shows the key words coded for. Latent content (underlying meaning of communication) was not coded, and therefore no interpretation of the data was inferred.

Coding then consisted of reading text passages thoroughly more than ten times. A code sheet was developed after reading the transcripts four times each (Appendix C). Then each key word was looked for in each transcript. Codes within each category were marked on transcripts, and pasted into the appropriate category's document. All transcripts were analyzed for each category.

Synopsis of Towns

The four towns in this study are rural communities with a grocery store with no local newspaper published in that community. This section provides a synopsis of each of the four towns in the study as to their location in conjunction to a nearby town:

Town A

Town A's nearest larger city is 15 miles away, which has a population of more than 3,000 people (Google Maps, 2013). Town B is less than 10 miles to the nearest town (Google Maps, 2013). Town C is less than 20 miles to a city with more than 120,000 people (Google Maps, 2013). Town D is less than 15 miles to one of the nearest towns (Google Maps, 2013).

Limitations

Similar to all exploratory studies, this study is limited as findings cannot be generalized across all rural communities. The study only looked at four rural communities in Kansas with noted short interviews. However, unlike in quantitative studies there is not an established amount of data that needs to be gathered in qualitative research (Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufmann, 2006). The number of interviews and data collected depends on what the researcher is trying to achieve (Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufmann, 2006). This study had two research questions, one for

each group of participants. Data was gathered through the interviews to identify and explain both research questions.

Extension offices recruiting participants for the study (convenience sampling) is another limitation to the study. As a result, the local extension offices played a role in identifying which community members were asked to participate and which were not. As previously stated, one of the major criticisms of the convenience sampling method is choosing participants from a group with known strong feelings or associations about the topic being studied (Moore, 2001). The sample in this study was recruited with help from the extension departments, in which recruited participants out of personal and professional association based on the qualifications given for the participants in the study. Community members were not recruited for the study based on associations with food and grocery and/or communication channels.

Also, since the participants were from small rural communities, they more than likely know the local merchants on a personal level and may to offend them. When issues are personal to the participants they may be reluctant to discuss them and give all details as compared to if the issue had not been of a personal basis (Opdenakker, 2006). Therefore, some of the answers provided by participants may have been censored due to not wanting to insult one of the local businesses in their community.

Chapter 4 – Findings

The aim of this study is to identify current communication channels used in the relationship between rural grocers sending out information and community members receiving information about food and groceries. This chapter presents the key findings from the interviews conducted with both rural grocers and rural community members. The results are organized by emerging themes using a grounded theory framework (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Community Members

The responses from the community members were analyzed using the grounded theory framework, which uncovers themes through multiple readings. The themes are: local versus non-local shopping habits; identification of information sources for grocery information; preferred consumer communication channels for receiving grocery information; and consumer satisfaction with current available grocery information sources.

Locally vs. Non-locally

The 12 community members (three male, nine female) were asked where they buy their groceries (locally or non-locally), and their reasons for doing so. In the current study locally is defined as the nearest grocery store to the community member's residence. The responses showed a mix of grocery shopping habits. Five participants shopped only locally, three participants shopped only non-locally, and four participants shopped both locally and non-locally (refer to Figure 3). The importance of identifying where each community member shopped for groceries is to identify any relationship between where the community members received information and where they shop for groceries.

Figure 3

Where Community Members Purchase Groceries

3

5

4

■ Locally

■ Mix

■ Non-locally

Communication Channels Being Used

In the interviews community members were asked where they found out about grocery information. Community members identified four communication channels they are currently using to receive food and grocery information: onsite promotion, word-of-mouth, email, and newspaper.

Mass communication channels are media used to relay information to a large population (Curtis, 2011). Within mass communication channels are traditional media and new media. Traditional media includes in this study newspaper, radio, mail, and fliers. New media in this study includes all Internet-based platforms of email, social media (Facebook in this study), and websites used for commerce.

Onsite

Most of the community members who talked about just walking into the grocery store did not specifically talk about the promotional displays or advertising in the grocery store. Four of the 12 participants talked about just knowing the grocery store was there, reflecting Baily's 2010 finding that grocery stores are important parts of communities. Therefore, community members know the institution exists, especially in small communities. Participants talked about walking into the store and buying their groceries without seeing an advertisement or other promotional materials prior to the shopping trip.

"The local grocery store used to put out an ad, but they don't anymore. It's just kind of go and get what you need I guess."

"Personally, I just walk in and buy my groceries. As simple as that."

One participant did state that she does get the flier the grocery store provides when she walks into the grocery store. "I usually just go and grab the ad on the counter."

Print Fliers/Inserts: Email and Mail

The traditional print fliers were a communication channel the community members used to receive grocery and food information. This finding is consistent with a previous study by Larkin and Grotta (1977) stating traditionally print inserts were one of the main ways for consumers to receive grocery information, as six participants in this study used print communication channels to receive grocery information. Of the six participants, five read the fliers included in newspapers and one used mailed fliers to receive grocery information (refer to

Figure 3). Thus makes the print fliers and inserts the most used communication channel for grocery information for the community members interviewed.

Six of the 12 participants who said they used the newspaper for grocery information stated the newspapers were published in nearby communities since each of the four towns the community members reside in does not publish a local newspaper (Kansas Historical Society, 2013). One participant called the nearby town's newspaper the "new local paper."

"A lot of times it's the ads (print), and it's also from knowing the facility. Some things are seasonal so I know what things are going to come in, and if they have it I rely on the ads."

"There's a flier that comes out every week for the stores… It's in a little local newspaper that comes out."

One participant stated he read the newspaper every week, and was aware that the newspaper had grocery ads in it. However, when he was asked if the advertisements were beneficial to him he replied, "Not really because I don't read them."

Word-of-Mouth

Two of the community members said they received their grocery information through word-of-mouth.

" Yeah, I talk with folks about groceries and what's available at the store."

"If I need something I will call around to find out if they have a certain thing I need…"

Figure 4 shows the number of community members who used each communication channel for their main source of food and grocery information.   The communication channel "newspaper" in the chart refers to a newspaper published in a nearby community.   Five community members used a newspaper published in a nearby community, four used onsite, one used mail, and two used word-of-mouth.

Figure 4
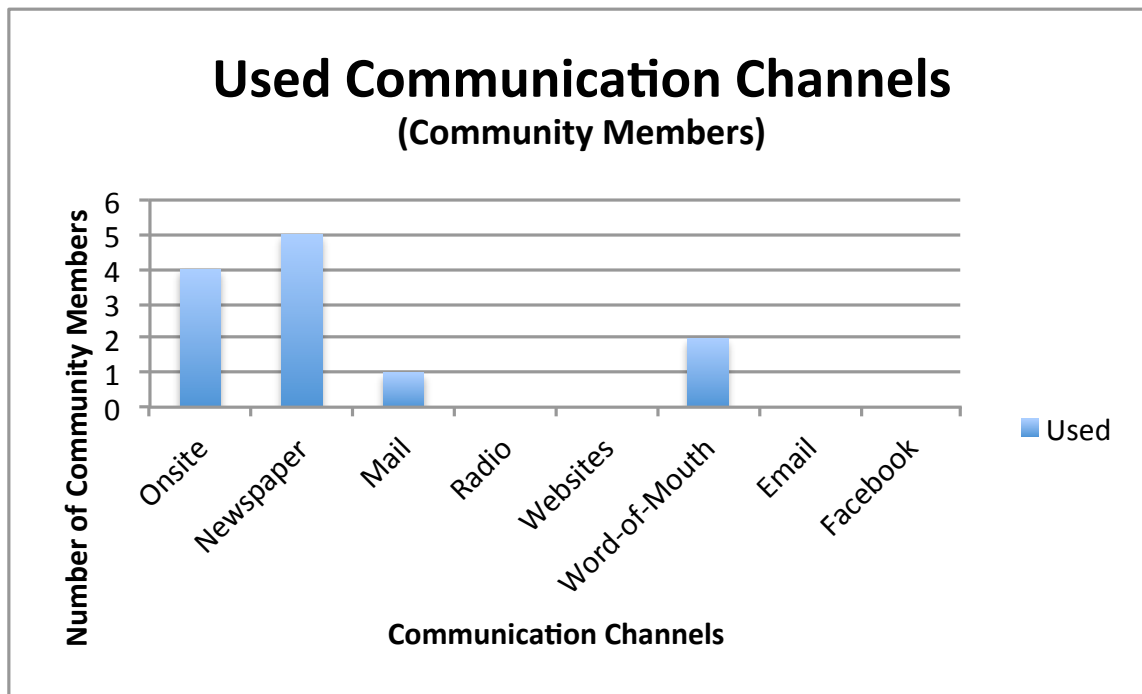
Most Beneficial Communication Channels

After participants were asked how they received grocery information, they were asked what would be the most beneficial way to receive information in their shopping area.

Traditional Print Promotions

      Hosbond & Skov (2007) found that people are beginning to rely on more mobile marketing, but the people interviewed for this study said they still preferred traditional print promotions. No participants said social media or an Internet-based promotion or advertisement as ways they were receiving the majority of grocery information. In this study social media was defined as Facebook and Twitter. Internet-based promotion was defined as a store's website or other platform that is not used for social interaction among people. However, when asked what would be the most beneficial way for them to receive information, some answers did include Internet-based promotions and mobile marketing.

      The community members who preferred traditional print promotions either wanted them to be communicated through the channels of mail or newspapers published in nearby communities. Ten out of the 12 community members stated that traditional media would be a beneficial way to receive food and grocery information. As previously stated the "newspapers" the community members are referring to newspapers published in a nearby community that the community members are using.

     "Probably that way (through newspapers) or in the mail. I think those are the easiest because I sure check my mail everyday, but I may not get online and check for ads and do things like that."

"Personally for me it's in the mail, a flier or something."

"For me personally probably by mail, and by newspaper. . . I don't' always get the newspaper just because I try to cut costs in my budget, but if I know there is something I want, again it goes by season, or if there is going to be a big sale then I will get the newspaper to know what's going on."

Most participants explained how they have used the same types of communication channels to receive grocery information over the years, mostly the print newspaper. The traditional promotions were how they had been receiving grocery information, and it was the communication channel that they said were benefiting from the most. When one participant was asked if he used traditional media to receive grocery information he said,

"I would say more so newspaper and radio. That kind of stuff for me personally. I would get more out of that stuff than out of social media and that kind of stuff."

Email/Internet

The participants that did express benefiting from receiving information over the Internet referred to email as the main communication channel. Seven community members stated email would be beneficial to receive grocery information. One of the seven community members said he would prefer email because he already used that communication channel and checked it frequently.

"For me my preference would be probably an email that has the weekly specials. Probably because I monitor my email more than anything else."

"Oh, if it (grocery information) came across email that'd be good."

"…maybe email because I check that probably twice a day, and I have it with me at work. Not that I would check it at work (laughing)."

"Email would be great, but not too often. I get annoyed when I get too many emails from one store."

"I mean, like I said earlier, if I received a text or email with the big specials on the grocery store I'd probably notice it, but at the same time I'll tell you I hate to see print media decline even further."

When asked if social media or a store's website was a beneficial way to receive grocery information the responses were not favorable. The community members were not using a store's website or social media to retrieve grocery information, and did not feel that it was a beneficial way to retrieve it in the future because it was not something they were checking frequently. Only one participant said that she would use the Internet if she was looking for something specific, but other than that she wanted the information to be communicated through print fliers in the newspaper.

"If I was really looking for something, like, let's say, to see if they had hamburger on sale I would go to that, but I wouldn't necessarily sit down every week and just look at that."

"The store's website only for if I really want to know something. Like if a store has a product or something like that."

Word-of-mouth

Seven community members stated word-of-mouth would be beneficial to receive grocery information, even if the benefit was only "somewhat." One participant replied, "Yes, most definitely."

Another participant talked about how persuasive word-of-mouth is regarding grocery information saying, "That's (word-of-mouth) a lot of times pretty persuasive."

Word-of-mouth persuasion stemmed from the tangible promotions as described by one participant. She received information by word-of-mouth from her mother, who received the information from the print newspaper advertisements.

"Yes, that's (word-of-mouth promotion) beneficial. Usually from my mom because she'll have usually already seen the ads and say 'oh, by the way, so-and-so had this on sale', because like I said she gets the daily news paper so she gets all the ads that come from the stores in Topeka and that kind of thing."

Onsite

Two community members stated the grocery store itself was the most beneficial way to receive information. Two community members said, "Probably just walking into the store."

Overall, the community members wanted to use a communication channel that delivered messages directly to them, whether it was through mail, newspaper, or email. Participants also wanted to have something come directly to them through a communication channel that they

were already checking. Even the participant who stated word-of-mouth was a beneficial way to receive grocery information wanted someone to tell her the information.

Figure 5 shows the communication channels deemed beneficial in some regard by community members for information from local merchants. A newspaper published in a nearby community was deemed the most beneficial communication channel as nine of the community members said so. Seven community members deemed both word-of-mouth and email beneficial. Radio was deemed beneficial by six community members, followed by mail with four community members, websites with three, and lastly, onsite with two community members.

Figure 5
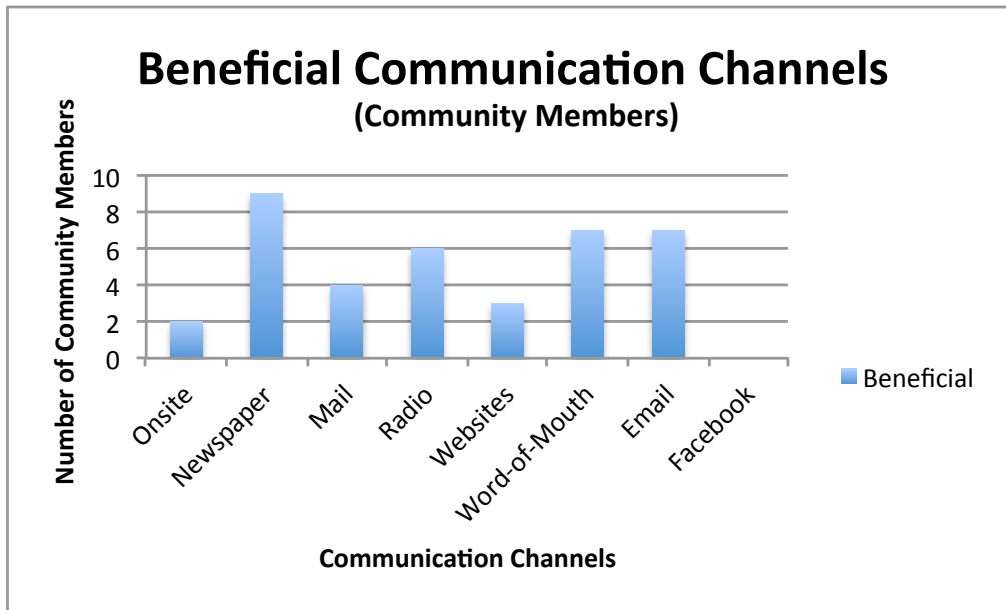
Figure 6 combines all the individual results reported above into one chart.

Figure 6

Communication Channels
(Community Members)
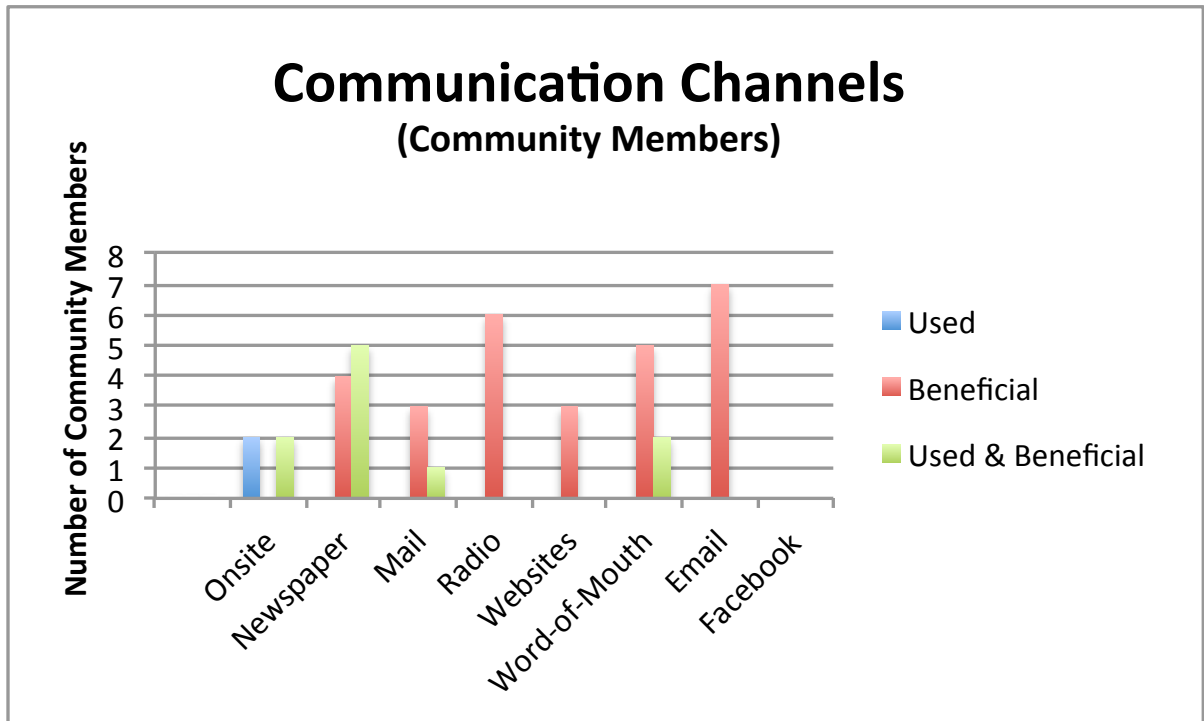
Perception of Local Grocers

Positive satisfaction

Participants had a high level of satisfaction with the communication channels their grocers and local merchants were using to communicate information to them. Statements that supported positive satisfaction included:

"Ya, I think they're doing a pretty good job. I can't think of any complaints I have."

"I don't know all the details of where they go or anything like that, but I feel that they do a good job of getting information out to their customers."

"I think the way they do it is a good way to get it out. And then when we go into the store there's extra ones (fliers) lying there as you go in that you can pick up…"

Another participant expressed satisfaction by explaining the process of how she received the information, and how it was an effective for her and her mother.

"Yes, I think they are because they also do things like send mailings out for people who I guess get the newspaper… the regular newspaper because my mom gets them on Tuesdays when the rest of the ads come out for all the stores in the area."

One participant described the local merchants doing a good job of getting information out about their products by stating that everyone in the community knows that the grocery store is there.

"It's a small town, so everyone here already knows we have a grocery store, and pretty much what the store carries. This is true about other businesses, too."

Dissatisfaction

All respondents talked favorably about the local grocers.   Community members did not directly state they were unpleased or unhappy with the way local merchants and grocers were sending information. The most negative response said was, "I would say they do what they can, as far as what they can afford."

One participant stated that she was pleased with the type of promotion being used (advertisements in newspapers), but displeased about the day of the week the advertisements came out in the newspapers because it did not fit her shopping schedule.

"You know in all honestly I wish they would put their ads out on Monday, but most of the grocery stores put their ads out on Tuesday… You know I shop on the weekends or a Friday or something like that is what I should say cause I normally go shopping on the weekends since my kids are teenager age so I don't have to take them with me. Ya, so it'd be easier actually if they did it on a Sunday to be real honest with you or even a Friday I guess is what I'm saying. Cause usually I go shopping mainly in the evenings that's usually when I do go grocery shopping, but I like to do it, if I get the chance, I'd like to do it in the morning on like a Sunday morning or a early Saturday morning kind of thing. "

Overall, community members stated they were satisfied with the way local merchants in their communities were getting information out about their shopping area.

Grocers

Communication Channels Being Used

Grocers identified six different communication channels they were using to promote their grocery store. These six different communication channels were onsite, social media, traditional media (newspapers published in a nearby community and mail inserts), word-of-mouth, and the store's website. Each grocery store was only using one or two of these communication channels.

No two grocers used the same mix of communication channels to send food and grocery information to their customers.

Onsite & Word-of-Mouth

One grocery store owner stated having a presence in the community was the main source of promotion for her grocery store. Justification by the grocer for using onsite promotion was the size of the town. The grocer's responses about how she was reaching her customers using onsite promotion included:

"We live in a really small town so it's just driving by and just talking about it, but most people just know we're here."

"We just advertise on the front of the building if we have any sales. When you walk in we'll have that or we'll make signs with what is on sale and stuff like that.

The same grocery store owner also said her grocery store did cross-promotions with other businesses in town. In addition to the onsite promotions the grocery store was doing, community members were receiving the information about the grocery store from other businesses.

"We do some advertisements for other businesses so they come in and we do advertising on the windows and different stuff like that."

Social Media

One grocery store owner relied on Facebook and word-of-mouth as her two communication channels for promotion. When asked how she was reaching her customers the grocery store owner replied,

"Mostly by Facebook and word of mouth… We serve a daily lunch and we'll put that everyday what the menu is and put that on Facebook. Also, if we have a good recipe or something like that we will put that up on there. On Facebook we will take pictures of our flowers and put on there because we do have a floral department. Like right now its prom, so we'll put a thing on there (Facebook) about 'get your corsages and boutonnieres."

The same grocer described how she was using Facebook because placing advertisements in newspapers published in nearby communities was not reaching her customers. She had placed newspaper advertisements in the past, but was now using Facebook as her main communication channel to reach community members.

Another grocery store manager expressed how she had thought of using Facebook to promote the grocery store, but was not even using the platform herself.

"I've thought of like doing a Facebook page, but, like, I don't even get on it myself."

The grocery store owner of the same store stated that he was unsure of the effectiveness of using social media, and if it would be something of value for his time. He did mention that

one of the older ladies who lives a block away from the grocery store was on her computer a lot of her time so he could see how using it would be effective.

"The only problem is it also takes time out that I could be doing other things around here. And I'm not sure if the people in the community would use it, either."

"I mean, people know we're here, but I think those things (social media) would definitely be something to look into."

Fliers: Mail, Newspapers, and Online

Traditional media was still being used by two of the rural grocers. Fliers were distributed in three ways: newspapers published in nearby communities, regular mail, and in-store displays. The flier in digital format was posted on the store's website.

Responses from grocers on how they were reaching their customers through traditional media included, "We have weekly fliers." The grocer stated the weekly fliers were available for customers in the store. Other responses included:

"We have a newsletter that comes out once a month, and we do advertise in there (the newspaper)."

"The overall store has a website with each branch having their fliers posted online."

Overall, six different communication channels were identified that were being used by grocers to send information about food and groceries. Even though six different communication channels were identified, each grocer was using only one or two to promote their store.

Figure 7 shows the number of grocers who used each communication channel to reach their customers.

Figure 7

Used Communication Channels (Grocers)
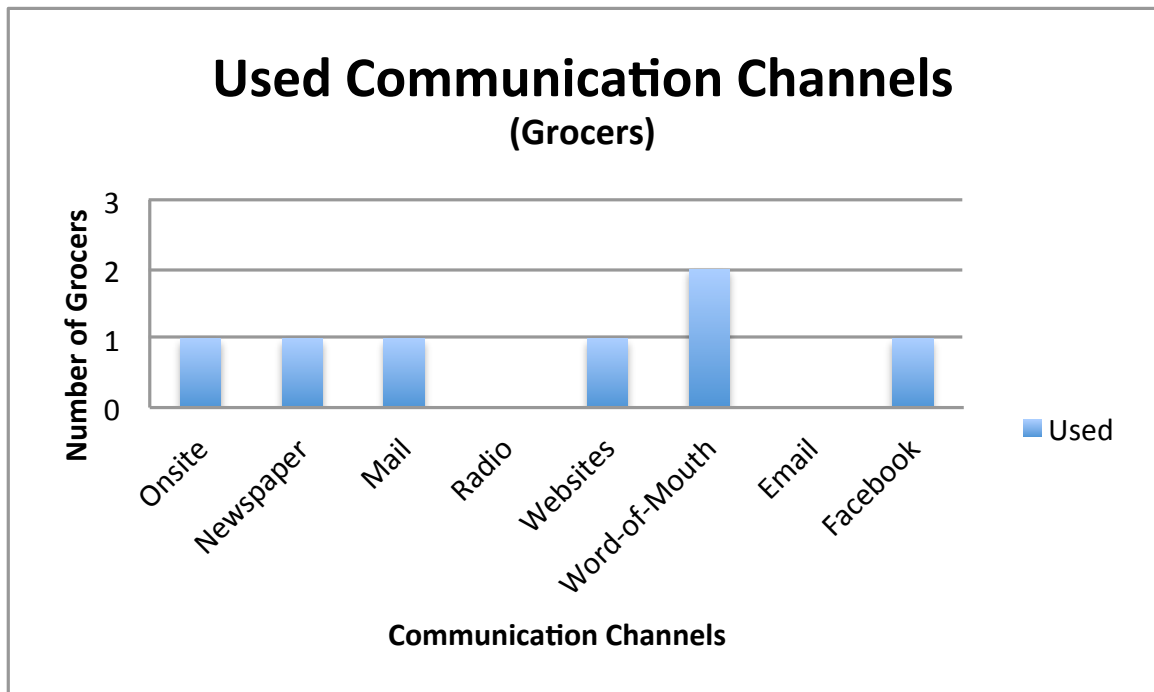
Sources of Promotions

Different sources were in charge of the communication channels used for promotions for the different grocery stores. Three of the grocery store owners/managers stated that their promotions were done by, in conjunction with, or with some "cooperation" with their distributers. One of the grocers stated her grocery store does a promotion every three to four months that is organized by the grocery store distributer.

"Yes, we have right now what's called a good buy sale, so in the promotion through them (their distributers) we do around every three, four months, they'll put out new stuff and that runs that three months then when that three months is up new things will go on sale that they tell us."

Another grocery store worked together with their distributers as to what products would be put on sale.

"Well, there has to be some cooperation. The distributers are the ones bringing the food, so we need to know what we can and can't put on sale."

When asked if there was any partnership with their distributers, one grocery store manager replied, "They're (the distributers) the ones that do my ads."

Another source in charge of promotions was the chain store that stated that corporate was in charge of the majority of the advertising and promotion.

"Corporate does the majority of the advertising and promotions. It's tailored to the needs of each individual store, while keeping all the stores, well, all the stores have some sort of, uniform fashion."

Grocery Store Owners as Communicators

Findings from the interviews showed rural grocery store owners, managers, and employees are more than people who send out food and grocery information. Grocery store

owners, managers, and employees are important communicators who contribute to the community's social fabric. The rural businesses are important to the community as the social structure in a community weaken due to businesses closing in the community (Thornburg, 2007).

A grocer and his manager discussed how the grocer store is a stopping place for tourists or people driving through. The grocery store is a staple in many communities and a place where people know they can find more than just groceries.

"People come in and ask different things. There's a Maxwell Wildlife Refuge and it's just what six miles outside of town? So you have a lot of people who aren't from here. Especially during the summertime they might be doing that where they drive and travel and stop at random places and to get there you have to drive through town and if they have a question, "well, where is it?," "how do we get there." What better place to stop than a grocery store because you know you're probably going to get your answer. So, lots of people stop in and grab some snacky things, some meat or whatever for sandwiches and ask how to get there and what else is around here and keep going."

"But yeah, you have to drive right through the center of town to get out there so a lot of people stop and make sure they're going to the right direction."

One grocer discussed having friendly employees was the edge that was needed to compete with the larger non-local grocery stores. His statement related to the social fabric of the community, as the grocery store is not only a business, but has a personality in the community as

well. The grocer participated in a seminar put on by his distributer who stated he received this advice:

> "They say that's our challenge. Meet them at the door, be friendly too them, never show your colors, smile even though you don't feel like it."

The actions of the rural grocers communicated to the community members seemed deeply rooted in the community. Through an interview with one of the grocers, it was apparent that the town really depended on the grocery store to take care of the elderly and sick.

> "There's a handicapped lady and her son that live a couple blocks away, and everyday we take them lunch."

> "We take him a meal everyday.   He just calls up and says what he wants and we deliver."

> "Then we had a man here, just behind the store here that was on oxygen.   All the time he couldn't get out I took him meals for a couple years… And then sit down on his stool and we'd visit a little bit"

The community members appreciate and recognize the efforts of the grocers. By helping the community the grocers are communicating positively through their actions. One community member stated was the reason she purchased at that grocery store.

"Oh gosh, this is going to sound weird but a lot of the reason we shop locally is because the manager is so willing to help the community and help in any way anybody need him to, so that to me promotes, maybe not promotes the prices, but promotes the business…"

A grocer stated that he was aware that the community appreciated his efforts by stating:

"That's one thing the community appreciates. That we take care of the elderly like that. We had a lady across the street here. I don't know how many meals we took to her, just time and again."

Perception of Communication Channels Used by Community Members

After grocers were asked how they were reaching their customers, they were asked if they felt those efforts were effective. The grocers identified four communication channels they felt their customers were receiving information through: word-of-mouth, onsite promotion, print fliers, and Facebook. All grocers believed the community members were using the same communication channels as the grocery store was using for food and grocery information. One grocer chuckled while stating, when asked where he thought community members were getting information about his store, "Well, hopefully from where we're sending it from."

Word-of-Mouth

Out of the four grocers who were interviewed, two grocers' perceptions of where community members were receiving grocery information were word-of-mouth. One grocer responded by saying community members were receiving information, "Probably through just talking."

The fourth grocer identified word-of-mouth as one of the main ways. She said her customers will come in and tell her word-of-mouth was how they found out about grocery information.

"Probably word-of-mouth more than anything. Somebody will come in and say 'so-and-so told me you have this' or something like that."

Onsite

Onsite promotion was one of the other communication channels identified by one grocer. She explained how the onsite promotion was in cooperation with other businesses in the same town.

"We do some advertisements for other businesses so they come in and we do advertising on the windows and different stuff like that. "

Facebook

Facebook was one grocer's perception of where the community members were receiving information because on her store's Facebook page users were interacting with the page.

"Well, on Facebook you have comments that come back and that type of thing."

The same grocer expressed how she was using Facebook because placing advertisements in a newspaper published in a nearby community was not reaching her customers. She had placed newspaper ads in the past, but was now using Facebook as her main communication channel to reach community members.

"We put a coupon in there and we ran it for two weeks and I didn't get any of them that came back."

Website

One of the grocery stores used a website. The grocery store had a "website of all stores," which was managed by corporate. Through the website the flier was also posted in a digital format.

Justifications

Two different reasons were given for how the grocers knew where customers were receiving information. One reason was that the grocer's customers would come in and tell her where they were getting information, "Ya, they'll just tell us." The other reason was that she had not heard any complaints about the fliers she was sending out.

Overall, the grocers believed the community members were using the same communication channels as the grocery store was using for food and grocery information. The grocers felt they were connecting with customers through the same communication channels being used. The reasoning for the connection was customer feedback by word-of-mouth and interaction on a social media platform.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

The purpose of this study was to identify current communication channels used in the relationship between rural grocers sending out information and rural community members receiving information about food and groceries. This chapter includes a discussion of the two research questions. The chapter also includes conclusions, recommendations for rural grocers, and suggestions for future research.

RQ1: Exploration of rural community members' use and identification of communication channels as an information source for food and grocery information.

Mass Communication Channels

Traditional Media

The information from the interviews showed that community members are using different communication channels to receive food and grocery information, with each community member relying on one or two communication channels. Community members identified two types of traditional media they are currently using to receive food and grocery information: newspapers published in a nearby communities and mail fliers sent through regular mail.

Previous studies have shown the reason technology has implications on the newspaper is because of the changing news consumption (Siles & Boczkowski, 2012). Since these changes result in new news formats such as blogs and social network sites (Siles & Boczkowski, 2012) one could assume that news consumers are also getting grocery information and advertisements through these communication channels. However, this is not the case, as the interviews showed

that the community members are still favoring traditional media. Rural grocers should take notice of this and provide information through newspaper and regular mail.

Since the local newspaper is no longer published in the rural communities looked at in this study, other print communication channels seem to have taken the place for many of the community members. However, community members are still reliant on newspapers published in nearby communities.

New Media

No community members were receiving their grocery information from the Internet or other digital communication channels, other than in supplemental ways (finding seasonal products). However, all community members stated they had access to Internet at home, work, or both. The Internet was not being used by community members to receive grocery information on a regular basis, but participants who said they used the Internet said they used it when looking directly for a product. T. Stafford and M. Stafford (2004) found consistent results in people using Internet content for learning and understanding needs. If a community member has a goal find information about seasonal products, that's when he or she might to use the Internet for food and grocery information.

The use of social media rose drastically during the years from 2007 to 2009 (Newman, 2009). Journalists even started to embrace social media to send information (Newman, 2009). Social media, such as FaceBook and MySpace, became popular around 2007 (Newman, 2009).

Social media not being used for grocery and food information by consumers on a regular basis was consistent with a previous study using uses and gratifications as social media has many identified uses, but the top desired uses, according to Raacke and Bondes-Raacke (2008), are of a social nature and not informational.

Email was a desired way for the community members to receive information. Therefore, community members want to use technology for food and grocery information. For rural grocers to successfully reach all audiences in the community, they need to implement several communication channels. This speaks to the combination of new and traditional media as it meets senders' and receivers' expectations.

Informal Communication Channels

Word-of-mouth and knowing where the grocery store was there physically were two informal communication channels that the community members were receiving food and grocery information from.

Word-of-mouth was used by community members, but was not a communication channel that was directly thought of when the community members were asked how they received their grocery information. However, many felt that word-of-mouth was a beneficial and persuasive communication channel to receive information about their shopping area when specially asked about word-of-mouth promotion.

Onsite or knowing the grocery store was there was one of the underlying factors in the rural communities' social fabric. These rural communities are small and close-knit; therefore, the community members know that the local grocery store is there.

These communities have embedded markets where there is a social relationship between the consumers and retailers (Miller & Kean, 1997). The social fabric extends farther than the community members discussing food and grocery information. The findings showed that there was a high satisfaction with community members about with way the local grocers were getting out information. These rural communities seemed close knit and understood what it was like to

have a business or to live in these rural communities. That sense of understanding seemed to contribute to satisfaction with the grocery store in their community.

Overall, community members were receiving grocery information from communication channels that the grocery store was using such as advertisements in newspapers published in a nearby community, word-of-mouth, and onsite promotions (refer to Figure 8). Even though the community members were using these communication channels, they were not always the preferable or most beneficial for the community members. Therefore, the comparison of the use of communication channels between grocers and community members was not always the same.

Figure 8 shows the communication channels being used by community members for grocery information on a regular basis, and the communication channels used by grocers in efforts to reach customers. The figure is a comparison of the uses of communication channels by both groups to see if there is similar use between the two.

Figure 8
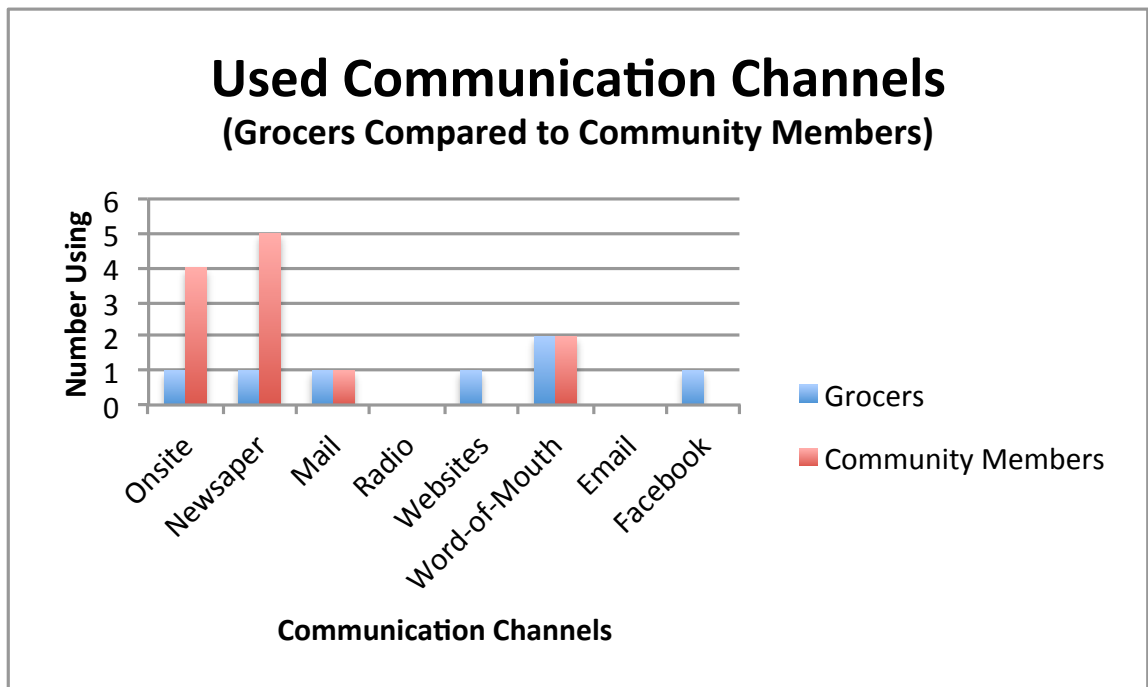
Uses and Gratifications of Communication Channels

This study contributes one more context example to uses and gratifications theoretical theory, in this case rural commerce and rural community, through the information collected from rural residents. Most studies and examples to uses and gratifications theory have been done with more urban areas.

Uses and gratifications theory suggests that individuals use media to achieve gratification (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). Grocers may have more success with reaching community members by using that communication channels the members are already using, such as email. One of the community members explained how email would be beneficial to receive information about his shopping area because it was a channel that he was already checking for other needs. Also, email may be a desired communication channel as it can satisfy two gratifications of informational and social integrative needs (Katz, Gurevitch, & Haas, 1973). Communication channels that are beneficial and important to the community members, but that the community members are not using for food and grocery information shows the potential of being useful for food and grocery information.

Community members may feel that a communication channel that they are already using, such as email would benefit them to receive food and grocery information because they already satisfy other needs through that channel.

RQ2: Exploration of grocers' use of communication channels to inform customers about food and grocery information.

In this limited study the grocers used two different forms to reach the community members: mass communication channels and non-mass communication channels in which is part of the underlying social fabric for the community. Following suit with the community members the mass communication channels are divided into traditional media and new media.

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Grocers identified seven communication channels they used: onsite, social media,

newspapers (published in nearby community), mail, word-of-mouth, and the store's website.

Mass Communication Channels

New media used were social media and the store's website. Traditionally media being

used were print newspapers published in a nearby community and regular mail.

Traditional Media

Traditionally grocery stores used inserts and advertisements in the newspaper as one of

their main promotions (Hartnett, 2000). Even though the four communities in the study do not

currently publish a newspaper, grocery stores are still sending information through newspapers

published in a nearby community.

Fliers were the most used communication channel by grocers. Grocers used fliers

differently, whether it was sending the fliers through the mail or newspaper, or posting a digital

format online on the store's website. The grocery stores that were using the newspaper as a

communication channel to send grocery information were using a newspaper published in a

nearby community.

New Media

One of the grocers was using Facebook as a communication channel to promote her

grocery store.   However, this study and a previous study shows commerce informational use is

not one of the top desired uses for Facebook (T. Stafford & M. Stafford, 2004). Another grocer

stated that having himself or personnel work on a social media site takes time that they could be

doing something else. Being busy is one of the main reasons people find that they do not have a

social networking account (Raacke & Bondes-Raacke, 2008), and therefore choose to not engage in a social networking platform.

Gilbert, Karahalios, and Sandvig (2008) found that rural community members have trouble establishing trust with distant people through social media. Therefore, local rural retailers should have the upper-hand when competing with nonlocal stores through social media since they already have recognition and relationships established.

The study by Wilson and Boone (1999) that looked at Internet use in rural Kansas among community leaders showed business executives were most likely to use the Internet. Therefore, it was surprising that three of the grocers did not have a website for their grocery store, as grocers are major communicators and can be leaders in the community.

Informal Communication Channels

Informal communication channels used were word-of-mouth and onsite. The informal communication channels used were part of the community's social fabric, built on the social structure of each community.

Grocers are using onsite promotion and word-of-mouth, taking advantage of the small size of their communities. Justification given by the grocers for using onsite promotion was the size of their community, as community members could drive by the grocery store to see the signs and sales on the grocery store building or in the window. The community is smaller than urban areas and grocers said people just know that there is a grocery store in the community.

Also, since the rural communities are smaller, word-of-mouth is used and recognized as an important communication channel for grocers about their grocery store. Even the grocery store as a building is part of the social fabric, as it provides a meeting place for "the locals" to come and communicate. The social fabric of the rural communities showed high interpersonal

marketing, which is parallel to rural lifestyle of using more personal communication than mass communication channels.

One of the grocers talked about how everyday the farmers come in, have coffee, and communicate.

"Breakfast in the morning, there is communication in here and coffee. Like this fellow over here (pointing) and there's about 10 more that will be in a little bit, and there's a lot of communication that goes on."

Some community members said they were satisfied with the way local merchants were sending out information about their products, but still said they would benefit from using another communication channel than the one they were currently using to receive food and grocery information. None of the community members who said they would benefit from using email to receive information from local merchants actually used that communication channel to receive information about food and grocery due to it not being available by the grocers.

Overall, six different communication channels were identified as being used by grocers to send information about food and grocery in four Kansas communities in which do not publish a newspaper. Even though six different communication channels were identified, individual grocers were only using one or two to promote their store. Grocery store owners may not have the awareness of promotional practices that can be implemented by their grocery store, whether that is through cooperative print advertising programs or learning how to successfully market a business through social media platforms. Training on these promotional practices should be

given through the next Rural Grocery Store Initiative Summit, which provides education for rural grocers on sustainability practices ("Rural grocery store," 2012).

Grocery stores are a vital part of a community (Bailey, 2010). However, the importance of grocery stores goes beyond selling groceries and employing community members. Grocery store owners, managers, and employees are key communicators to members of the community and out-of-towners passing through.

Even though grocery store owners are communicators in a community, the grocer may not see himself/herself in that role. To be effective communicators for their own grocery store businesses, grocers need to be able to effectively communicate interpersonally with customers. In rural communities it is important for the customers to be able to put a face to or establish a relationship with the grocers. Skills on marketing interpersonally could also be part of a training session through K-State's Rural Grocery Store Initiative Summit that would educate on the best public relations practices for rural grocers.

Conclusion

Grocery stores are a vital part of a community ("Rural grocery store," 2012). However, in Kansas 82 rural grocery stores were closed from 2007 to 2010 (Procter, 2012). These communication channels include: onsite, newspapers published in nearby communities, mail, word-of-mouth, Facebook, and websites. Other communication channels not currently being used by community members but deemed beneficial by community members to receive information from local merchants were email and radio.

Overall, grocers are using onsite promotion, word-of-mouth, social media, traditional media, and online. The types of communication channels being used by both rural grocers and rural community members are in two forms: mass communication channels and information

communication channels. Grocers using different types of communication channels is consistent with a study done by Ingene (1983) in which grocery store promotions can have a variety of marketing-mixes. Therefore, rural grocers should implement a variety of marketing mixes to effectively reach different target audiences.

A study by Coester and Cicci shows that technology and mobile behaviors are still lower in many rural areas as compared with urban areas (2010). Additionally, newspaper research shows that people are using new technological formats to receive information (Siles & Boczkowski, 2012). The findings from this current study concur with the two studies as some community members stated using email would be a beneficial way to receive information about their shopping area, but many community members are still using traditional print communication channels to receive grocery and food information.

Community members also discussed other communication channels (other than email and traditional print communication channels) of onsite promotion, word-of-mouth, and radio as being communication channels they would benefit from using to receive information from local merchants.

Lastly, the rural grocer is an important communicator in the community. Whether it is the grocery store owner, manager, or employee the grocery store is a central hub of communication. The grocers communicate with the community members in the store, through helpful acts in the community, and as a source for information to people driving through the community.

Overall, the results of this study found communication channels that both rural grocers and rural community members are using to send and receive food and grocery information in communities in which do not publish a newspaper but have previously. Community members

stated they were happy with how rural grocers were sending out information about food and grocery, but many stated other communication channels that would benefit them more, such as email.

Recommendations for Rural Grocers

This study provides valuable recommendations for rural grocers on the types of communication channels that could best reach rural community members about food and grocery information .

The results of this study show overall rural community members are not using just one communication channel. Even though each individual community member is only using one or two communication channels, overall community members are using multiple communication channels (refer to Figure 4). Therefore, for a rural grocer to successfully reach all the community members in his or her community, the grocer needs to implement several communication channels to send food and grocery information.

The communication channels used to send information needs to be direct. These communication channels were print materials through regular mail and newspapers (published in a nearby community), email, and word-of-mouth. Therefore, community members want food and grocery information to come directly to them through a communication channel they are already using. They do not want to search for the information, except if they are looking for something specific such as seasonal products.

When a grocer does have a website he or she needs to be conscious of the needs of the consumer, such as if the consumer is looking for specific information, sales, or online purchasing. The website is used for a basic delivery of information, and not only a shopping venue (T. Stafford & M. Stafford, 2004).

Community members in rural communities are beginning to use technology for information by stating email would be a beneficial way to receive information from local merchants.   The study by Coester and Cicci (2010) shows that mobile and technology behaviors in rural areas are lower, as in comparison with urban areas, but the community members want to take advantage of some technology, especially email.   Since email is a direct way to receive messages, and many community members use email, this would be a direct and inexpensive way to send food and grocery information.   Grocery stores can have an email list that will allow community members to voluntarily receive grocery store emails.   The email list needs to be voluntary due to issues of permission and disturbance being major issues with using mobile marketing (Hosbond & Skov, 2007).

For many of these rural grocers budget is a major issue.   One of the grocers stated that he used to pay for fliers, but he didn't know if the cost was worth the return.

"Well, it costs money.   It used to be after we had an LLC we would advertise, I would put fliers out, maybe put something in the free press, but man, that got so costly that we hardly knew if it paid for it.   So I don't know we're kind of in a dilemma of how to advertise and how not to or what we should do and what we shouldn't do."

"And then we see a pile of them in the trashcan.   It was just throwing money away."

This study shows that the majority of community members want to use email as a communication channel to receive information from local merchants, which has no printing or postage costs.   The only cost would be time of the grocer to produce the message to send and an

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Internet connection. Therefore, email would be an effective way to reach consumers and be budget conscious.

Another key for retailers to prevent outshopping for products is to make them available locally. As Wayland, Simpson, & Kemmerer's (2003) study shows, multi-channel shoppers still shop locally for the "lower-ordered" (groceries) items. This study agrees with the recommendations from the Wayland, Simpson, & Kemmerer (2003) study as local retailers (grocers in this study) should provide information to let customers know what is available, begin an email newsletter, and use frequent marketing programs to create value.

Figure 9 shows a suggested mass communication model for rural grocers to send messages out to community members. The print newspaper published in a nearby community and email were two of the most beneficial communication channels for information by the community members. If grocers can only send information out through one or two communication channels, dependent on time and budget, newspaper and email would be the suggested two to use. Tier 2 shows beneficial and used communication channels the community members are using. If grocers have resources Tier 2 is suggested to be used in addition to Tier 1 to send grocery information to community members.

Figure 9

Suggested Mass Communication Channel Model for Rural Grocers

Message

Tier 1: Most Beneficial & Used

Newspaper   Email

Tier 2: Beneficial & Used

Radio   Mail   Social Media   Website
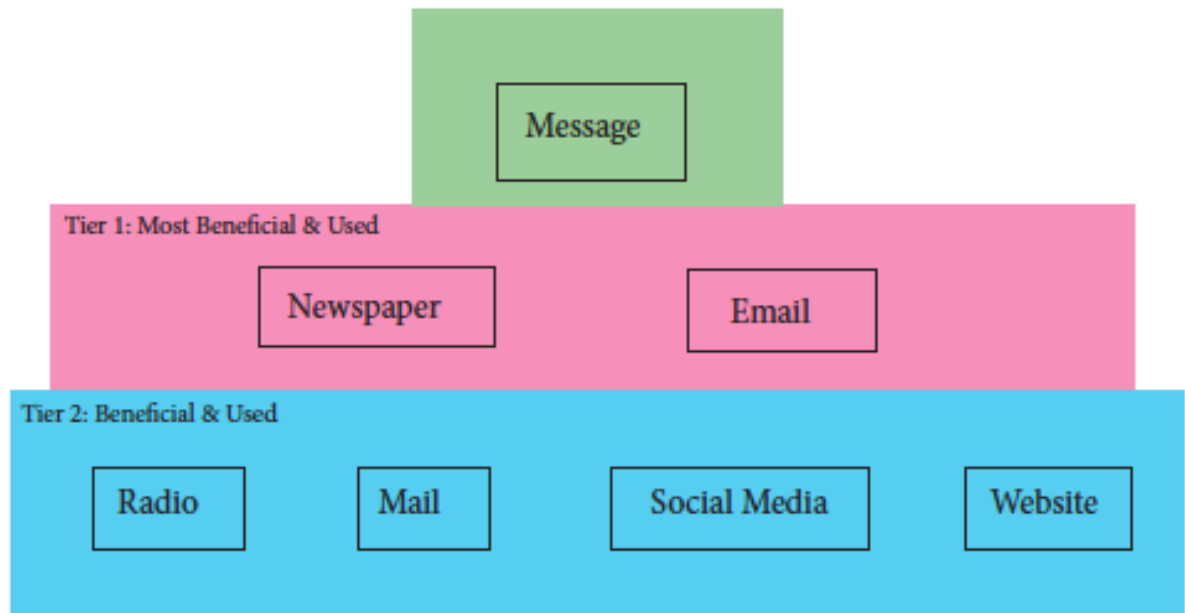
Suggestions for Further Research

The study lays the foundation for other studies regarding communication channels used to send and receive food and grocery information based on the relationship between the rural grocer and rural community members.

A similar study could be conducted using the identified communication channels found in the study. This qualitative study identifies communication channels that could be used in a quantitative study. A quantitative study using the communication channels would allow a larger sample, and could further extend the reach of this research. Specific demographic information could be identified, as well as trends and correlations among education, finances, and other work locations features with the eight communication channels identified in this study: onsite of

grocery store, newspaper (published in nearby community), mail, radio, website, word-of-mouth, email, and Facebook.

Further research could examine rural grocers' communication strategies in grocery stores. This study presents the types of communication channels to be used, but not the content of messages that should be communicated through these communication channels. These messages may also test to see what message elements appeal to customers to achieve sustainability in the rural community. This information would help grocers tailor messages and communication channels.

Research looking at other rural retailing businesses could also stem from this study. This study looks at the communication channels used in the relationship of community members and grocers for rural grocery retailing information. Also, other retail business strategy could be examined to see if it would be applicable for grocery stores.

A qualitative study could be conducted looking at the relationship between the social and monetary capitol. This and a previous study show a link between the social and commerce aspects of rural businesses (Thornburg, 2007). Therefore, it would be informational for rural grocers to understand the monetary value of establishing relationships with community members and interpersonal communication about the grocery store. A study looking at the social value in terms of monetary capitol would provide another facet to rural grocers' marketing strategies, as well as show rural grocers the importance of the social aspect to the sustainability of their business.

Overall, further research can expand from this study using the identified communication channels from this study in a quantitative study. More studies can help craft a strategic communication plan for grocers, which could look at the best messages and practices to satisfy

the rural community member's experience of receiving information about the grocery store to the actual shopping experience.

Appendix A - Community Members' Interview Questions

Where you do buy your groceries?

    Describe a normal grocery-shopping trip?

    What percentage of your groceries do you buy at your nearest grocery store?

    What is the reason you buy locally?

    What is the reason you buy non-locally?

        Where do you purchase the rest of your groceries? Why?

How do you find out about what groceries are available?

    Price?   Availability?

    How do you find out information about groceries?

    Has that changed over the years?

What would be the most beneficial way for you to receive information about your shopping area?

    Do you feel local merchants are doing a good job of getting information out about their products? Why?

Do you think there is enough information about groceries for you living in a rural area?

    If yes, tell me how? If no, tell me how they could improve?

    What would be an example of a good way for grocery information to reach you?

Beneficial ways to receive information about local shopping:

Choices:

Traditional media: newspaper, radio

Internet: store's website, social media

Word of mouth

Other

Anything else you would like to add or tell me?

Appendix B - Grocer's Interview Questions

How are you reaching your customers?

    Do you feel these efforts are effective? Why or why not?

Where do you think that the community members are getting information about your store?

    What are the reasons you think that?

    How do you receive information about what customers want from your grocery   store?

    What do the customers tell you?

Did you ever place ads in the local newspaper? If so, how did you use it?

    Did you think the newspaper ads were useful?

    Did you change the ways you were promoting your products due to customer buying

    changing?

What changes did you make after the newspaper closed?

What sort of changes have you seen in your customers after the newspaper went away?

    Have you had more or less customers since the newspaper left?

    Why would you think that?

Anything else you would like to add or tell me?

Appendix C - Coding Sheet

COMMUNICATION CHANNELS IDENTIFIED BY RURAL GROCERS AND RURAL
COMMUNITY MEMBERS FOR USES OF SENDING AND RECEIVING FOOD AND
GROCERY INFORMATION

Community Members

A. Types of communication channels used

1. Onsite of Grocery Building
2. Newspaper (published in nearby community)
3. Mail
4. Word-of-Mouth

B. Shopping locally or non-locally

1. Locally
2. Non-Locally
3. Mix

C. Most Beneficial Communication Channels

1. Newspaper (published in nearby community)
2. Mail
3. Radio
4. Email
5. Websites
6. Word-of-Mouth
7. Onsite of Grocery Building

D. Perception of Local Merchants

1. Positive
2. Negative

Grocers

E. Communication Channels Being Used

1. Onsite
2. Word-of-Mouth
3. Social Media
4. Newspaper (published in nearby community)
5. Mail

6. Website

F. Sources of Promotion

1. Distributers
2. Corporate
3. Manager/Owner

G. Perception of Communication Channels Used by Community Members

1. Word-of-Mouth
2. Onsite
3. Facebook
4. Website

H. Justifications for Perceptions

1. In Person Customer Feedback
2. Interaction of Social Media Platform

Appendix D - Rural Grocery Store Initiative's Previous Survey Results Tables

KSU Center for Engagement and Community Development

USDA RBOG Project:

Rural Grocery Sustainability Project

Owner Survey

Table 1

*OS refers to "Owner's Survey"

Question #2. (OS)		
Who is/are your primary grocery supplier(s)?		
Affiliated Foods	70.6%	(60/85)
American Wholesale Grocers	16.5%	(14/85)
Nash Finch	5.9%	(5/85)
American Foods	1.2%	(1/85)
Amcon	1.2%	(1/85)
Convenience Store Services	1.2%	(1/85)
F&A	1.2%	(1/85)
Great Lakes Wholesale	1.2%	(1/85)
Saint Joe Distributing	1.2%	(1/85)

Question #1. (OS)*					
What major products and services does your store offer? *Check all that apply.*					
ATM/ Bank	18.6%	(18/86)	hunting/fishing/camping supplies	12.8%	(11/86)
books/cards/gifts	79.1%	(68/86)	institutional supply (school, hospital)	46.5%	(40/86)
café/restaurant	20.9%	(18/86)	pharmacy	15.1%	(13/86)
catering	15.1%	(13/86)	photo development	37.2%	(37/86)
delicatessen	47.7%	(41/86)	pre-packaged snacks	82.6%	(81/86)
fuel	10.5%	(9/86)	self-serve snacks/drinks	52.3%	(45/86)
groceries	100.0%	(86/86)	video rental	55.8%	(48/86)
Other:	17.4%	(15/86)			
flowers, hardware, lottery, meat processing, soda fountain, work clothes					

Table 3

Question #3. (OS)		
What products do your secondary suppliers supply?		
Pop	78.8%	(63/80)
Chips/snacks	67.5%	(54/80)
Bread/bakery	40.0%	(32/80)
Milk/dairy	21.3%	(17/80)
Beer	17.5%	(14/80)
Meat/deli	13.8%	(11/80)
Pizza	8.8%	(7/80)
Other: books/magazines, cards, coffee, gifts, hardware, ice, movies, propane, tobacco, water		

Table 4

Question #4. (OS)		
Do minimum (purchasing/ordering) buying requirements create a problem for your grocery store?		
Yes	47.7%	(41/86)
No	51.2%	(44/86)
If yes how?		
Surcharge if minimum not met	39.5%	(15/38)
Order quantity too high	36.8%	(14/38)
Delivery	7.9%	(3/38)
Limits products	5.3%	(2/38)

Table 5

Question #5. (OS)		
If minimum buying requirements are a problem, what solutions might you suggest?		
Combine orders	56.3%	(18/32)
Lower minimum	18.8%	(6/32)
Increase customer base	3.1%	(1/32)
Increase purchases	3.1%	(1/32)

Table 6

Question #6. (OS)		
As an independent grocer, do you feel you are getting fair pricing from your suppliers compared to chain stores?		
Yes	53.7%	(44/82)
No	40.2%	(33/82)
Yes-primary, no-secondary	6.1%	(5/82)
Comments:		
"Big" stores get preferred pricing	25.7%	(9/35)
Low volume increases prices	22.9%	(8/35)
Secondary suppliers (pop) are higher	17.1%	(6/35)

Table 7

Question #7. (OS)		
Have you had problems getting products delivered because of your location?		
Yes	34.5%	(29/84)
No	65.5%	(55/84)
Comments:		
Off main highway or remote location	38.1%	(8/21)
Reduced delivery schedules	14.3%	(3/21)

Table 8

Question #8. (OS)		
Do you sell locally produced food in your store?		
Yes	70.6%	(60/85)
No	29.4%	(25/85)
If yes, what products?		
Produce/fruits/vegetables	41.0%	(25/61)
Meat	18.0%	(11/61)
Tomatoes	18.0%	(11/61)
Melons	14.8%	(9/61)
Corn	9.8%	(6/61)
Eggs	6.6%	(4/61)
No, due to regulations	4.9%	(3/61)
No local supply	1.6%	(1/61)
Other: baked goods, bird seed, cucumbers, honey, noodles, pepper nuts, potatoes, sauces		

Table 9

Question #9 (OS)
Which of the following are major challenges for your store? *Check all that apply.*

availability of satisfactory labor	62.4%	(53/86)	lack of community support	40.5%	(34/86)
competition with large chain grocery stores	80.0%	(68/86)	low sales volume	39.3%	(33/86)
debt and/or high payments	24.7%	(21/86)	narrow profit margins	60.0%	(51/86)
government regulations	47.1%	(40/86)	required minimum buying requirements from vendors	30.6%	(26/86)
high inventory costs/low turnover	27.1%	(23/86)	shoplifting/bad checks/internal theft/unpaid accounts	36.1%	(30/86)
shortage of working capital	27.1%	(23/86)	taxes	51.8%	(44/86)
high operating costs (utilities, building lease, repairs/maintenance, etc)	74.1%	(64/86)	other (specify)	13.3%	(11/86)

Other: advertising, credit card fees, insurance, license, minimum wage, permits

Which of the above do you feel is the most significant for you and your store?

Operating costs/utilities	25.4%	(18/71)
Labor availability/costs	23.9%	(17/71)
Competition from large chain stores	22.5%	(16/71)
Taxes, regulations	16.9%	(12/71)
Lack of community support	14.1%	(10/71)
Low sales volume	5.6%	(4/71)

Table 10

Question #10. (OS)		
Do you collaborate with other small independently owned stores?		
Yes	67.9%	(57/84)
No	29.8%	(25/84)
Some	2.4%	(2/84)
If yes, for which purposes? *Check all that apply.*		
Cooperative advertising/marketing	32.1%	(27/84)
Grocery distribution purposes	24.1%	(20/84)
Sharing concerns and/or ideas	51.8%	(44/84)
To achieve minimum buying requirements	28.6%	(24/84)
Other: share labor, share orders		
If no, would you be interested in doing this?		
Yes	55.2%	(16/29)
No	37.9%	(11/29)
Maybe	6.9%	(2/29)
Why or why not?		
No		
too busy, too small, warehouse does it for us		
Yes		
Can learn a lot from other grocers, spillover effects, stronger buying power		

Table 11

Question #11. (OS)
Do you feel that a statewide alliance of small, independently owned grocery store owners may have value?

Yes	77.9%	(53/68)
No	17.6%	(12/68)
Maybe	4.4%	(3/68)
If yes, how could it help?		
Share ideas – marketing strategies, find different solutions to common problems,		
increased buying power, there is strength in numbers, increased lobbying power for government		
AND suppliers		

Table 12

Question #12. (OS)
What marketing strategies have you used in your grocery stores that have been effective in drawing in customers?

Advertising		
Newspapers	46.4%	(39/84)
Radio	26.2%	(22/39)
TV	7.1%	(6/84)
Flyers/inserts	76.2%	(64/84)
Internet/WWW	8.3%	(7/84)
Promotions	40.5%	(34/84)
Word of mouth	59.5%	(50/84)
Other:	13.1%	(11/84)
sponsor community events, promote extra customer service, special services (meat, delivery), senior citizen discount, specials		

Table 13

When running a grocery store, how important is it to you to offer each of the following? Rate the importance of each by circling the number that best fits your response. (OS)					
	Not Very Important				Very Important
1. Quality of food . . . . ,. .	0%	1.2%	1.2%	5.9%	91.8%
Comments: Must have fresh products					
2. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)	0%	3.5%	24.7%	36.5%	35.3%
Comments: Concentrates on staples, limited space					
3. Prices of items offered	0%	2.4%	25.9%	42.4%	29.4%
Comments: have to have low prices to be competitive with chains, still need to make a profit					
4. Customer service	1.2%	0%	2.4%	10.6%	85.9%
Comments: Advantage over chains					
5. Business hours	0%	0%	17.6%	48.2%	34.1%
Comments: Open for customer convenience					
6. Buying locally.	13.8%	13.8%	23.8%	8.8%	40.0%
Comments: Buy what we can, need more customers					

Which of the above do you feel is the most significant for you and your store?		
Customer Service	50.7%	(35/69)
Quality of food	44.9%	(31/69)
Prices	20.3%	(14/69)
Buying locally	7.2%	(5/69)
All	5.8%	(4/69)
Availability of food	5.8%	(4/69)

86

Table 14

How does your store do at providing the following to customers? Rate your store by circling the number that best fits your response. (OS)					
	Not Very Important				Very Important
1. Quality of food	0%	0%	4.8%	41.0%	54.2%

Comments: we do our best

2. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)	1.2%	3.6%	30.1%	44.6%	20.5%

Comments: minimum requirements causes problems, too rural -just the basics offered, we do our best

3. Prices of items offered	1.2%	8.4%	25.3%	53.0%	12.0%

Comments: operating on low profit margins, shop with smaller suppliers that offer higher prices, sometimes too high for competition

4. Customer service	0%	1.2%	1.2%	39.8%	57.8%

Comments: do the best we can, no credit card machine or ATM in the community

5. Business hours	1.2%	2.4%	20.5%	43.4%	32.5%

Comments: closed Sunday, not enough business, the same for over 30 years, we are open as much as we can-these need to change

6. Buying locally.	13.0%	15.6%	36.4%	18.2%	16.9%

Comments: buy what we can, do as much as possible, need customers to do better

Which of the above do you feel is the most significant for you and your store?

Customer Service	50.0%	(25/50)
Quality of food	38.0%	(19/50)
Prices	22.0%	(11/50)
Availability of food	6.0%	(3/50)
Buying locally	4.0%	(2/50)
All	4.0%	(2/50)

Table 15

Combined. a) Importance to you b) How well do you do (OS)					
	Not Very Important				Very Important
a. Quality of food	0%	1.2%	1.2%	5.9%	91.8%
b. Quality of food	0%	0%	4.8%	41.0%	54.2%
a. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)	0%	3.5%	24.7%	36.5%	35.3%
b. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)	1.2%	3.6%	30.1%	44.6%	20.5%
a. Prices of items offered	0%	2.4%	25.9%	42.4%	29.4%
b. Prices of items offered	1.2%	8.4%	25.3%	53.0%	12.0%
a. Customer service	1.2%	0%	2.4%	10.6%	85.9%
b. Customer service	0%	1.2%	1.2%	39.8%	57.8%
a. Business hours	0%	0%	17.6%	48.2%	34.1%
b. Business hours	1.2%	2.4%	20.5%	43.4%	32.5%
a. Buying locally.	13.8%	13.8%	23.8%	8.8%	40.0%
b. Buying locally.	13.0%	15.6%	36.4%	18.2%	16.9%

Table 16

Customer Survey (CS)* Question #1: Please circle the number that best represents the importance of each of the following to your grocery shopping expectations.					
	Not Very Important				Very Important
1. Quality of food	0%	0.4%	3.7%	21.3%	74.6%
2. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)	0.2%	2.3%	20.2%	42.6%	34.8%
3. Prices of items offered	0.3%	0.7%	14.5%	31.0%	53.5%
4. Customer service	0.2%	2.3%	15.4%	42.0%	40.1%
6. Convenient business hours	0.4%	1.7%	13.9%	45.5%	38.5%
9. Buying locally grown foods	4.6%	10.9%	26.1%	28.4%	30.0%

*CS refers to "Customer Survey"

Table 17

Customer Survey Question #2: Please circle the number that best represents how well your **local grocery store** meets your shopping expectations.					
	Doesn't meet Expectations				Exceeds Expectations
1. Quality of food	5.4%	11.1%	34.1%	35.0%	14.0%
2. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)	5.3%	17.4%	40.6%	27.9%	8.4%
3. Prices of items offered	6.7%	19.2%	42.3%	23.5%	7.8%
4. Customer service	3.6%	8.1%	23.3%	33.8%	30.7%
6. Convenient business hours	2.2%	5.8%	17.5%	43.3%	30.8%
9. Buying locally grown foods	7.1%	15.7%	40.0%	23.6%	13.2%

Table 18

Customer Survey Question: Combined	a)Importance		b)Meets expectations		
	Not Very Important				Very Important
a. Quality of food	0%	0.4%	3.7%	21.3%	74.6%
b. Quality of food	5.4%	11.1%	34.1%	35.0%	14.0%
a. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)	0.2%	2.3%	20.2%	42.6%	34.8%
b. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)	5.3%	17.4%	40.6%	27.9%	8.4%
a. Prices of items offered	0.3%	0.7%	14.5%	31.0%	53.5%
b. Prices of items offered	6.7%	19.2%	42.3%	23.5%	7.8%
a. Customer service	0.2%	2.3%	15.4%	42.0%	40.1%
b. Customer service	3.6%	8.1%	23.3%	33.8%	30.7%
a. Convenient business hours	0.4%	1.7%	13.9%	45.5%	38.5%
b. Convenient business hours	2.2%	5.8%	17.5%	43.3%	30.8%
a. Buying locally grown foods	4.6%	10.9%	26.1%	28.4%	30.0%
b. Buying locally grown foods	7.1%	15.7%	40.0%	23.6%	13.2%

Table 19

Combined Owner & Customer - Importance	a) Owner		b) Customer		
	Not Very				Very
	Important				Important
a. Quality of food	0%	1.2%	1.2%	5.9%	91.8%
b. Quality of food	0%	0.4%	3.7%	21.3%	74.6%
a. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)	0%	3.5%	24.7%	36.5%	35.3%
b. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)	0.2%	2.3%	20.2%	42.6%	34.8%
a. Prices of items offered	0%	2.4%	25.9%	42.4%	29.4%
b. Prices of items offered	0.3%	0.7%	14.5%	31.0%	53.5%
a. Customer service	1.2%	0%	2.4%	10.6%	85.9%
b. Customer service	3.6%	8.1%	23.3%	33.8%	30.7%
a. Business hours	0%	0%	17.6%	48.2%	34.1%
b. Business hours	0.4%	1.7%	13.9%	45.5%	38.5%
a. Buying locally........................	13.8%	13.8%	23.8%	8.8%	40.0%
b. Buying locally........................	4.6%	10.9%	26.1%	28.4%	30.0%

Table 20

Combined Owner & Customer - Expectations	a) Owner		b) Customer		
	Doesn't meet Expectations				Exceeds Expectations
a. Quality of food	0%	0%	4.8%	41.0%	54.2%
b. Quality of food	5.4%	11.1%	34.1%	35.0%	14.0%
a. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)	1.2%	3.6%	30.1%	44.6%	20.5%
b. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)	5.3%	17.4%	40.6%	27.9%	8.4%
a. Prices of items offered	1.2%	8.4%	25.3%	53.0%	12.0%
b. Prices of items offered	6.7%	19.2%	42.3%	23.5%	7.8%
a. Customer service	0%	1.2%	1.2%	39.8%	57.8%
b. Customer service	3.5%	8.4%	22.9%	34.2%	30.5%
a. Business hours	1.2%	2.4%	20.5%	43.4%	32.5%
b. Business hours	2.2%	5.8%	17.5%	43.3%	30.8%
a. Buying locally........................	13.0%	15.6%	36.4%	18.2%	16.9%
b. Buying locally........................	7.1%	15.7%	40.0%	23.6%	13.2%

Table 21

How do you assess the buying needs of your customer? (OS)		
Customer requests	51.7%	(30/58)
Monitor sales	15.5%	(9/58)
Ask	3.4%	(2/58)
Experience	1.7%	(1/58)

Table 22

Is your stocking of products responsive to customer requests? (OS)		
Yes (unqualified)	57.7%	(41/71)
Yes (qualified)	40.8%	(29/71)
when customers ask		
if possible, try		
Use to	1.04%	(1/71)

Table 23

What other concerns or comments do you have? (OS)
We need help educating people that shopping locally, not at Wal-Mart, etc. out of town and county hurts their community. Taxes are not paid in their county or town. If local people would support the store better, the easier it is to afford employees, etc. I could go on for page after page.
We need a system in which an older operator can come into contact with an interested party to buy grocery stores so they will be able to keep a store in a community. This is needed for all types of retail.
We live in a community with a older population, most high school graduates are leaving the area. It's hard to find employees now! What will it be like in 5 yrs?
We know we are needed in our community. We get that all the time. But, I have not yet figured out how to take my "community service" paycheck to the bank to pay off bills.
We just completed a survey of our services, products, and operational standards. Our customers are very satisfied in their shopping. This leads me to ask if our customers are happy with our store . Why do we struggle to retain only 40-42% of the available food dollars in our area.
The store must support the local economy in what supplies and services it purchases, along with attending all local events in order to expect community support

Space is a concern. We can't stock everything everyone wants.

We need recommendations on good financing options.

Probably my biggest concern in the communities that we do business in is the changing demographics and the reduction in population. Our customer base is either slowly dying or moving away.

Once again the manufacture could gear more for smaller stores. i.e. smaller purchase requirements

Low volume items

Limited space is a factor, keeping track of outdated products is difficult

It's so easy for people to go out of town to buy groceries. Wal-Mart takes a lot of customers away from a small town store.

I was the only pharmacy in our county and then our grocery store closed so I remodeled and put in a full line grocery store. By this diversification I think we will be able to succeed and stay in business. Our biggest struggle is keeping people's money in our own county.

Table 23 (Con't)

Government regulation, like minimum wages will increase salaries, mandatory health care for employees will be costly and minimum buying requirements will force small stores to close

Declining population

Cost of deliveries (fuel charges) freight charges

Community support is a BIG part of the equation

Community doesn't value the local store

Collecting sales tax, receiving no compensation. To many government regulations to comply with. Little government help compared to large corp, large agriculture, energy grants etc.

As small retailers we need to stop whining, and get to work. You have to earn customer loyalty every day.

About to retire and hope someone will buy the store and keep it in the community

Appendix E - Rural Grocery Store Initiative's Previous Survey Results Tables

KSU Center for Engagement and Community Development

USDA RBOG Project:

Rural Grocery Sustainability Project

Customer Survey

Table 1.

Customer Survey. Question #1: Please circle the number that best represents the importance of each of the following to your grocery shopping expectations.	Not Very Important				Very Important
1. Quality of food	0%	0.4%	3.7%	21.3%	74.6%
2. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)	0.2%	2.3%	20.2%	42.6%	34.8%
3. Prices of items offered	0.3%	0.7%	14.5%	31.0%	53.5%
4. Customer service	0.2%	2.3%	15.4%	42.0%	40.1%
5. Cleanliness of store	0.3%	0.3%	7.0%	31.2%	61.2%
6. Convenient business hours	0.4%	1.7%	13.9%	45.5%	38.5%
7. Travel time to the grocery store	3.1%	7.8%	27.8%	32.7%	28.6%
8. Supporting local business	0.8%	2.9%	14.4%	32.1%	49.7%
9. Buying locally grown foods	4.6%	10.9%	26.1%	28.4%	30.0%

Table 2.

Customer Survey Question #2: Please circle the number that best represents how well your **local grocery store** meets your shopping expectations.					
	Doesn't meet Expectations				Exceeds Expectations
1. Quality of food	5.4%	11.1%	34.1%	35.0%	14.0%
2. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)	5.3%	17.4%	40.6%	27.9%	8.4%
3. Prices of items offered	6.7%	19.2%	42.3%	23.5%	7.8%
4. Customer service	3.6%	8.1%	23.3%	33.8%	30.7%
5. Cleanliness of store	5.4%	5.7%	20.0%	39.3%	29.1%
6. Convenient business hours	2.2%	5.8%	17.5%	43.3%	30.8%
7. Travel time to the grocery store	2.1%	2.5%	14.5%	33.7%	46.7%
8. Supporting local business	3.4%	3.9%	19.4%	31.7%	41.3%
9. Buying locally grown foods	7.1%	15.7%	40.0%	23.6%	13.2%

Table 3.

Customer Survey Question: Combined	a)Importance		b)Meets expectations		
	Not Very Important				Very Important
a. Quality of food	0%	0.4%	3.7%	21.3%	74.6%
b. Quality of food	5.4%	11.1%	34.1%	35.0%	14.0%
a. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)	0.2%	2.3%	20.2%	42.6%	34.8%
b. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)	5.3%	17.4%	40.6%	27.9%	8.4%
a. Prices of items offered	0.3%	0.7%	14.5%	31.0%	53.5%
b. Prices of items offered	6.7%	19.2%	42.3%	23.5%	7.8%
a. Customer service	0.2%	2.3%	15.4%	42.0%	40.1%
b. Customer service	3.6%	8.1%	23.3%	33.8%	30.7%
a. Cleanliness of store	0.3%	0.3%	7.0%	31.2%	61.2%
b. Cleanliness of store	5.4%	5.7%	20.0%	39.3%	29.1%
a. Convenient business hours	0.4%	1.7%	13.9%	45.5%	38.5%
b. Convenient business hours	2.2%	5.8%	17.5%	43.3%	30.8%
a. Travel time to the grocery store	3.1%	7.8%	27.8%	32.7%	28.6%
b. Travel time to the grocery store	2.1%	2.5%	14.5%	33.7%	46.7%
a. Supporting local business	0.8%	2.9%	14.4%	32.1%	49.7%
b. Supporting local business	3.4%	3.9%	19.4%	31.7%	41.3%
a. Buying locally grown foods	4.6%	10.9%	26.1%	28.4%	30.0%
b. Buying locally grown foods	7.1%	15.7%	40.0%	23.6%	13.2%

Table 4.

Owner Survey. When running a grocery store, how important is it to you to offer each of the following? Rate the importance of each by circling the number that best fits your response.					
	Not Very Important				Very Important
1. Quality of food	0%	1.2%	1.2%	5.9%	91.8%
2. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)	0%	3.5%	24.7%	36.5%	35.3%
3. Prices of items offered	0%	2.4%	25.9%	42.4%	29.4%
4. Customer service	1.2%	0%	2.4%	10.6%	85.9%
5. Business hours	0%	0%	17.6%	48.2%	34.1%
6. Buying locally.	13.8%	13.8%	23.8%	8.8%	40.0%

Table 5.

Owner Survey. How does your store do at providing the following to customers? Rate your store by circling the number that best fits your response.					
	Not Very Important				Very Important
1. Quality of food	0%	0%	4.8%	41.0%	54.2%
2. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)	1.2%	3.6%	30.1%	44.6%	20.5%
3. Prices of items offered	1.2%	8.4%	25.3%	53.0%	12.0%
4. Customer service	0%	1.2%	1.2%	39.8%	57.8%
5. Business hours	1.2%	2.4%	20.5%	43.4%	32.5%
6. Buying locally.	13.0%	15.6%	36.4%	18.2%	16.9%

Table 6.

Owner Survey. Combined. a) Importance to you b) How well do you do					
	Not Very				Very
	Important				Important
a. Quality of food	0%	1.2%	1.2%	5.9%	91.8%
b. Quality of food	0%	0%	4.8%	41.0%	54.2%
a. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)	0%	3.5%	24.7%	36.5%	35.3%
b. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)	1.2%	3.6%	30.1%	44.6%	20.5%
a. Prices of items offered	0%	2.4%	25.9%	42.4%	29.4%
b. Prices of items offered	1.2%	8.4%	25.3%	53.0%	12.0%
a. Customer service	1.2%	0%	2.4%	10.6%	85.9%
b. Customer service	0%	1.2%	1.2%	39.8%	57.8%
a. Business hours	0%	0%	17.6%	48.2%	34.1%
b. Business hours	1.2%	2.4%	20.5%	43.4%	32.5%
a. Buying locally.	13.8%	13.8%	23.8%	8.8%	40.0%
b. Buying locally.	13.0%	15.6%	36.4%	18.2%	16.9%

Table 7.

Combined Owner & Customer - Importance	a) Owner		b) Customer		
	Not Very				Very
	Important				Important
a. Quality of food	0%	1.2%	1.2%	5.9%	91.8%
b. Quality of food	0%	0.4%	3.7%	21.3%	74.6%
a. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)	0%	3.5%	24.7%	36.5%	35.3%
b. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)	0.2%	2.3%	20.2%	42.6%	34.8%
a. Prices of items offered	0%	2.4%	25.9%	42.4%	29.4%
b. Prices of items offered	0.3%	0.7%	14.5%	31.0%	53.5%
a. Customer service	1.2%	0%	2.4%	10.6%	85.9%
b. Customer service	3.6%	8.1%	23.3%	33.8%	30.7%
a. Business hours	0%	0%	17.6%	48.2%	34.1%
b. Business hours	0.4%	1.7%	13.9%	45.5%	38.5%
a. Buying locally........................	13.8%	13.8%	23.8%	8.8%	40.0%
b. Buying locally........................	4.6%	10.9%	26.1%	28.4%	30.0%

Table 8.

Combined Owner & Customer - Expectations	Doesn't meet Expectations				Exceeds Expectations
a. Quality of food	0%	0%	4.8%	41.0%	54.2%
b. Quality of food	5.4%	11.1%	34.1%	35.0%	14.0%
a. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)	1.2%	3.6%	30.1%	44.6%	20.5%
b. Availability of food (variety, brand choices)	5.3%	17.4%	40.6%	27.9%	8.4%
a. Prices of items offered	1.2%	8.4%	25.3%	53.0%	12.0%
b. Prices of items offered	6.7%	19.2%	42.3%	23.5%	7.8%
a. Customer service	0%	1.2%	1.2%	39.8%	57.8%
b. Customer service	3.5%	8.4%	22.9%	34.2%	30.5%
a. Business hours	1.2%	2.4%	20.5%	43.4%	32.5%
b. Business hours	2.2%	5.8%	17.5%	43.3%	30.8%
a. Buying locally.........................	13.0%	15.6%	36.4%	18.2%	16.9%
b. Buying locally.........................	7.1%	15.7%	40.0%	23.6%	13.2%

a) Owner   b) Customer

Table 9.

Customer Survey

What do you consider "locally grown foods" to be? *Check all that apply.*

Food grown within certain distances:

- 49.4%   0-50 miles
- 28.3%   50-100 miles
- 22.2%   100-200 miles

Food grown within certain regions:

- 43.4%   county of your residence
- 42.3%   counties adjacent to your county
- 50.1%   in the State of Kansas
- 18.3%   in Kansas and surrounding states
- 15.1%   in the United States

Table 10.

Customer Survey

Please mark the appropriate responses to the following:

<table>
<tr><td align="center">Local Grocery Store</td><td align="center">Chain Grocery Store</td></tr>
<tr><td>Visits per month</td><td>Visits per month</td></tr>
<tr><td>4.0% none</td><td>1.1% none</td></tr>
<tr><td>41.5% 1-4 times</td><td>70.9% 1-4 times</td></tr>
<tr><td>25.1% 5-8 times</td><td>20.9% 5-8 times</td></tr>
<tr><td>29.1% more than 8 times</td><td>7.1% more than 8 times</td></tr>
<tr><td> </td><td> </td></tr>
<tr><td>Estimated av. dollar amount spent per visit</td><td>Estimated av. dollar amount spent per visit</td></tr>
<tr><td>38.0% $0.00 - $20.00</td><td>6.8% $0.00 - $20.00</td></tr>
<tr><td>57.9% $20.00 - $100.00</td><td>61.1% $20.00 - $100.00</td></tr>
<tr><td>3.6% $100.00 or more</td><td>31.9% $100.00 or more</td></tr>
<tr><td> </td><td> </td></tr>
<tr><td>Primary reason for visit. Check all that apply.</td><td>Primary reason for visit. Check all that apply.</td></tr>
<tr><td>50.7% getting weekly/monthly groceries</td><td>81.3% getting weekly/monthly groceries</td></tr>
<tr><td>80.6% picking up a few essential/emergency items</td><td>40.6% picking up a few essential/emergency items</td></tr>
<tr><td>2.1% ATM/bank</td><td>4.2% ATM/bank</td></tr>
<tr><td>13.9% eating at restaurant/café/deli</td><td>8.7% eating at restaurant/café/deli</td></tr>
<tr><td>1.6% entertainment/browsing store</td><td>13.2% entertainment/browsing store</td></tr>
<tr><td>1.7% pharmacy</td><td>34.6% pharmacy</td></tr>
<tr><td>1.3% photo development</td><td>18.8% photo development</td></tr>
<tr><td>7.6% video/DVD rental</td><td>3.6% video/DVD rental</td></tr>
<tr><td>22.2% supporting local food growers/producers</td><td>4.5% supporting local food growers/producers</td></tr>
<tr><td>62.6% supporting my community</td><td>5.3% supporting my community</td></tr>
</table>

Table 11.

Customer Survey
I shop primarily where I work
<u>40.0%</u>   Yes   <u>43.2%</u>   No

Table 12.

Customer Survey
So that we may group your responses with those of similar respondents, please answer the following questions:

Distance you are willing to travel to get groceries?

10.6%	0-5 miles
15.6%	5-10 miles
28.0%	more than 10 miles
45.6%	distance is not an issue

What is your age?

7.9%	under 30
33.9%	31-50
41.2%	51-70
16.9%	over 70

What is your weekly family grocery budget?

30.9%	under $50
62.0%	$100 to $200
3.4%	greater than $200
3.6%	$50 to $100

What is your annual household income?

29.9%	$20,000 to $35,000
27.2%	$35,000 to $50,000
39.2%	greater than $50,000
3.2%	less than $20,000

What is your gender?

77.4%	female
21.6%	male

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