Becoming Agricultured: Creating an Agriculture Literacy Podcast for Consumers

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Introduction

Today's consumers want to become more aware of where their food comes from. There is a need and a desire to bridge the gap between consumers and production agriculture. Less than 2% of the U.S. workforce is involved directly in agricultural production today — 40% was in 1900, according to USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS). One way to reach consumers is through audio podcasts. Podcasts are digital audio recordings that are streamed online. A study from *Edison Research* shows that 70% of the US population is familiar with the term "podcasting" – up from 64% in 2018 and that 50% of all US homes are podcast fans (Winn 2019). The podcast *Becoming Agricultured* will be a platform to show the relationship between agriculture and the environment, food, fiber and energy, animals, lifestyle, the economy and technology.

The podcast is aimed to tell agriculture's story through factual research and personal accounts of those involved in different sectors of the agriculture industry and cultivate agriculture literacy among individuals. From the dairyman in the Central Valley, to the congressman on Capitol Hill, the goal of *Becoming Agricultured* is to use these figures in agriculture to combat misconstruing myths with educational podcast segments and the power of social media. The aim of this paper is to research the development of a successful podcast series for consumer education.

Background

Consumers and Agriculture Literacy

Each individual grocery shopper has his or her own priorities and opinions. Because of conflicting information consumers hear about food, they are left skeptical of most claims and information from various sources. Less than 2% of the U.S. workforce is involved directly in agricultural production today — 40% was in 1900, according to USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS). Most Americans today are so far removed from direct agricultural that they have no reason to question the propaganda against agriculture operations created by activist groups and uneducated individuals. According to Public Agricultural Research Spending and Future U.S. Agricultural Productivity Growth, by 2050, global agricultural demand is projected to grow by 70-100% due to population growth, energy demands, and higher incomes in developing countries (Ishmael, 2013). Meeting this demand with existing agricultural resources, beyond agriculture expansion and research, will require raising the agriculture literacy level among consumers. Beyond economic driving forces, consumers are policy voters. By helping consumers understand different agriculture practices and production necessities, individuals will make more informed votes towards policies and regulations that effect the agriculture industry.

How to Start a Podcast

Podcasts have the potential to facilitate communication about a variety of topics to several different audiences. From consumers to researchers and policymakers, podcasts can be used as a channel to guide a conversation about subject matter from the perspective of the podcaster. The aims of this paper are to describe the development of an interview-based podcast. The podcast will be designed to reach an audience of consumers with no background in agriculture and who have a desire to learn where their food comes from. The project will describe how to publish this podcast on Sound Cloud and iTunes and how to promote by way of social media.

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Technology is increasingly being integrated into the goals of agricultural communications personnel. An entity of this technology includes podcasts. Podcasts are digital audio recordings that are streamed online. A study from *Edison Research* shows that 70% of the US population is familiar with the term "podcasting" – up from 64% in 2018 and that 50% of all US homes are podcast fans (Winn 2019). The podcast is named *Becoming Agricultured* to reflect the content of food and fiber education. The format will involve interviews, opinion pieces and factual education-focused content. The sample topics that will be covered are presented in table 1. The podcast artwork, displayed in figure 1, and branding will be platonic to capture the curiosity of listeners.

Episode	Category	Topic
Episode 1	The Dairy Industry	Animal Welfare & Treatment
Episode 2	The Produce Industry	Food Safety
Episode 3	Agriculture Policy	Labor Issues
Episode 4	The Beef Industry	Sustainability
Episode 5	The Dairy Industry	Dairy Nutrition
Episode 6	The Produce Industry	Organic vs. Conventional
Episode 7	Agriculture Policy	Water Rights

Table 1: Episode Topics

Figure 1: Podcast Artwork

Branding: Building an Audience

Becoming Agricultured is aimed to be branded on social media sites of Facebook and Instagram. These two platforms were chosen to help cultivate listenership and an audience based off their individual algorithms and users. 97% of social advertisers chose Facebook as their most used and most useful social media platform. Facebook continues to be the most popular social networking site in terms of number of active users. As of October 2018, it had a little over 2 billion active users (Zote, 2019). While Facebook holds the highest number of active users, Instagram has become increasingly more popular among the younger generations. Instagram continues to attract a younger audience with 72% of teens saying that they use the platform. This is an impressive increase from 2015 when 52% of teens said that they used the platform (Zote, 2019).

Building an audience on social media not only raises the likelihood of people downloading each episode, but also sets the podcast so potential followers will want to learn more about the

content. In a recent study, results showed that consumers are 77% more likely to buy from a brand they follow on social media (Zote, 2019). Applying this to the desire of gaining listenership indicates that social media users who follow *Becoming Agricultured* are more likely to listen to the *Becoming Agricultured* podcast. Attracting followers will be done through photo sharing, short cinemas, podcast video segments and live casting. These tactics will include educational pieces to entice listeners, as well as contests and engagement forums. Branding on social media will begin after podcast episodes are curated to determine appropriate messaging and to have enough content to maintain listenership after launch.

Methodology

Pre-Interview and Recording

Before interviews are conducted and recorded, constructive and informational questions for the interviewee should be formed. This is done in preparation to the interview and given to the interviewee ahead of time to ensure well researched and accurate content (see attached document for questions). Interviewees should be selected by credibility and experience. They are to be contacted and briefed on the subject and purpose of the podcast episode.

In-person Interview

Interviewees are to be instructed to meet in a quiet, non-disturbed place. Locations may vary depending on the current location of certain individuals. The interviews are to be recorded from start to finish and edited post interview.

Remote Interview

Interviewees are to be instructed to join in on a Zoom (https://zoom.us/) conference call and be in a quiet, non-disturbed place. The call is to be audio recorded from start to finish and edited post interview.

Recording

A microphone by *FiFine Technology* is recommended for audio recording. The USB microphone includes a metal tripod stand and a user manual. Apple MAC OS computer setup includes plugging in the USB, selecting the microphone as the sound input, and selecting the audio device in the sound system preferences. The microphone is to be kept at a 3-5-inch distance from speakers mouth to maximize sound quality.

Post Recording

After interviews are conducted, audio is to be edited via the Garage Band software. Introductions, transition music, and farewells should be added post recordings. Other editing is to be done to convey professional production quality, remove dull material and ambient noises, and shorten running times.

Editing Essentials with Garage Band

1. Open Garage Band application and upload recorded track.
2. To prepare: Split audio into smaller segments to isolate audio.
3. Determine where in the track to make the edit by clicking and dragging the Playhead to the beginning of the audio track
4. Choose Edit > Split Regions at Playhead to make the first cut.

5. Move the Playhead to the location of edit. Then choose Edit > Split Regions at Playhead to make the next cut.
6. Single click the segment between the two cuts and delete selection.
7. To join the two remaining audio segments, click and drag one segment over to the other segment.

Theme Music
To establish brand and consistency, a royalty free song should be chosen to be played at the beginning of each episode. The song was retrieved from *Incompetech* (https://incompetech.com/music).

Introduction Greeting
The elements included in the introduction greeting include:
1. The show's name: *Becoming Agricultured*
2. The name of the host: *Madalyn Souza*
3. Episode Guest: *Varies*
4. Tagline to identify show: *"Educating consumers on ... today!"*

Submit Podcast
To submit a podcast for publishing on iTunes there are several requirements for each category, including:
1. System and account requirements
2. Feed requirements
3. Artwork requirements
4. Content requirements

To review the requirements in full, visit the *iTunes Podcast Help Center* (https://help.apple.com/itc/podcasts_connect/#/itc1723472cb)
After the podcast has been tested and validated, use Podcasts Connect to submit the podcast to Apple Podcasts.

Discussion

First year PhD student, Jacqueline Aenlle, studies and specializes in Agricultural Communications at the University of Florida. Aenlle has focused on instructional
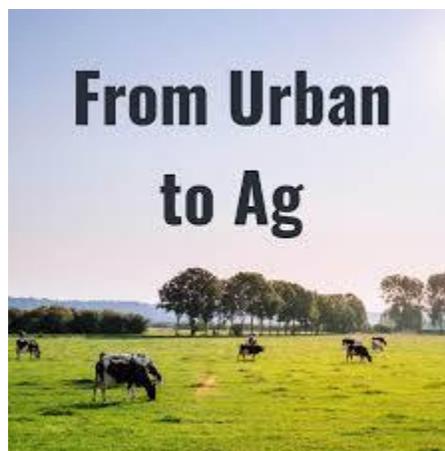

Figure 2: From Urban to Ag

communication, specifically podcasting, and throughout her studies she has created and produced the podcast *From Urban to Ag*. *From Urban to Ag* is a podcast series that focuses on decreasing ambiguity on topics surrounding food, agriculture, and environmental science. Aenlle takes questions from everyday consumers and present them to industry professionals. The podcast series has five episodes produced from October 2019 to present. This discussion section focuses on Aenlle's findings throughout her production and additional advice she has moving forward.

Important Features
Before recording episodes, it is important to know the audience, utilize networks, and understand the niche category. It is perceived that to attract a large audience, content needs to be broad. However, content needs to be tailored to a specific audience. In addition to, one of the most crucial aspects of any podcast is high-quality audio. Out of the five senses that the human body has, a podcast is only triggering one of these five—sense of hearing. Because there are no other aspects to distract, the listener needs to have access to maximized audio quality to achieve engagement.

Interviews
The most important part of any podcast is the content. Careful thought and consideration should go into podcast topics and interviewees. After selection, interview questions should be crafted in advance and delivered to the person being interviewed. This is to ensure that the interviewee will be comfortable with the questions, stay on topic, and communicate all necessary and important information during the interview. The interviewer should practice the phrasing of questions in a neutral and non-biased tone. It is also important to eliminate verbal affirmations, so the flow of the listener is not interrupted.

Editing and Distribution
There are multiple audio editing software's available for podcasters. *iMovie*, *Garage Band*, and *Adobe Software (Adobe Audition)* are among the most popular as they are easily accessible and affordable. *iMovie* and *Garage Band* are a part of Apple's Mac software and *Adobe Audition* is available through Adobe Software subscription accounts. Distribution of podcasts can be done through multiple programs. Many podcasts use websites for promotion and publication. Other distribution websites include *Pod bean*, *Sound Cloud*, and *Anchor*. Aenlle found Anchor to be the most user friendly because the software automatically publishes podcast episodes on streaming services.

Additional Tips
Throughout the publication and reflection of *From Urban to Ag*, Aenlle noted advance tips and tricks for producing a podcast. She stressed the importance of branding and marketing. Increasing marketing efforts is the next step to connecting with an audience. This is what makes a podcast unique and shows an audience what is offered.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to research the development of a successful podcast series for consumer education. Between the background, methodology and discussion, the aim was met and the information presented will help develop a podcast that will tell agriculture's story through factual research and personal accounts of those involved in different sectors of the agriculture industry and cultivate agriculture literacy among individuals.

In conclusion, there are multiple steps to follow to produce a successful podcast series that aims to educate consumers on agricultural practices. Moving forward, it is important to keep in mind some of the main discoveries in this paper. To produce a successful podcast series, it needs to have a specific target audience and quality audio content. In the case of a potential podcast series like *Becoming Agricultured*, the target audience would be consumers that are inquiring about different agricultural practices and methods. All in all, between conducting interviews, editing audio, and building a social media presence, a podcast requires planning and consistency.

Moving forward, the author anticipates utilizing the plans presented. The author will continue examining, exploring, and planning *Becoming Agricultured* to one day launch and thrive on the podcast scene.

Citations

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