Connecting Online: Garden Centers’ Use of Facebook Marketing

Background Summary

The green industry has accounted for over $200 billion in the United States economy (AgCensus, 2012). Garden centers should be connecting with customers online (Behe, Dennis, Hall, Hodges, & Brumfield, 2008).

Social media has become a popular use of marketing for many companies (Behe et al., 2008).

The social-media marketing sector is a great way to connect rural populations (Gilbert, Karahalios, & Sandvig, 2010).

The growing amount of people using social media has become a big part of everyday consumption, reaching nearly 82% of the world population (Zhu & Chen, 2015).

Nurseries and garden centers have typically been more comfortable with traditional forms of marketing like newspapers and yellow pages, but could benefit from online marketing opportunities (Behe et al., 2008).

Purpose

Quantify the use of social media as a marketing tool for garden centers across the United States.

Methods

- This study used a quantitative content analysis.
- A sample of 289 from a list of over 500 garden centers registered by the American Horticulture Association.
- A codebook was developed and tested for inter-ate reliability.

Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business Information (N=289)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>247 (94.8%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>161 (55.7%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>236 (81.7%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>158 (54.7%)</td>
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- Hours of Operation
- Website
- Email
- Store Address

The number of garden centers that have included specific business information on their Facebook Page.

The percentage of garden centers by Facebook page type.

Conclusions

Results of this research indicate that while garden centers in the U.S. are using Facebook, they may lack the understanding of the important elements in social-media marketing. This could suggest that businesses might be more comfortable with printed advertisements. Another social media advertisement implication could be the knowledge gap of how to use social media as a marketing tool.

Recommendations

- Practitioners should make every effort to fill out all relevant data on Facebook, including hours of operation, web pages, contact information, and physical address.
- Further research may be done to take a deeper look into the understanding of marketing for garden centers.

References