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### PRESENTERS

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The Ohio State University



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### OUTLINE OF PRESENTATION

- Project scope and goals
- Background
- Defining social media champions
- Rural social media user profiles
- Factors in diffusion
- Factors in adoption and use
- Best practices
- Future research



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### PROJECT SCOPE AND GOALS

*Our goals for this project ...*

Identify rural business owners who are social media champions in their communities and profile their best practices.

Develop a model of social media diffusion and adoption processes to identify factors that facilitate social media adoption.

Develop case studies concerning best practices in social media by rural retailers.



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### SOCIAL MEDIA-DEFINITION

*Social media (SM)* refers to a group of Internet-based applications... that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010). (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube, blogs)

Social media is a form of digital communication characterized by:

- High social presence (intimacy, immediacy)
- Media richness (low ambiguity and uncertainty)
- Opportunity for self-presentation and self-disclosure (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010)

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### THE RURAL BUSINESS CHALLENGE

**Small rural businesses:**

- Have been slower to adopt social media strategies.
- Limited exposure to new technologies.
- Less access to support networks.
- Lack of time and money, skills.

*Quinn, McKitterick, McAdam, & Brennan, 2013*

**Rural SM users:**

- Are younger and have about half the number of 'friends'.
- Post fewer comments, log in more frequently, and have fewer reciprocal relationships.
- Have geographically smaller networks.
- Are more likely to use social media to deepen relationships with people they already know.

*(Gilbert, Karahalios, and Sandvig 2010).*

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**DIFFUSION AND ADOPTION MODELS**

**ROGERS' DIFFUSION OF INNOVATION**

**TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTANCE MODEL (TAM)**

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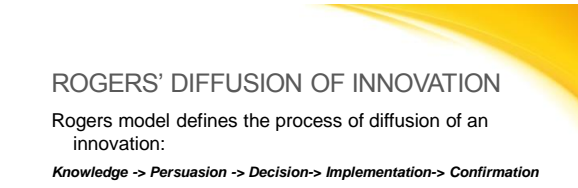
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**ROGERS' DIFFUSION OF INNOVATION**

Rogers model defines the process of diffusion of an innovation:

***Knowledge -> Persuasion -> Decision-> Implementation-> Confirmation***

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Diffusion is influenced by:

- Communication channels (local vs. mass media, networks, change agents)
- Adopter characteristics (previous experience, innovativeness, socio-economic, personality)
- Nature of innovation (relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, observability)

*Rogers (2003)*

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**TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTANCE MODEL (TAM)**

TAM predicts adoption of a new technology based on:

- Perceived attributes of the innovation
  - Ease of use
  - Usefulness
- Communication channels
- Nature of the social system
- Change agents' promotional efforts
- Nature of the decision

*Venkatesh, Morris, Davis and Davis, 2003*

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**WHO ARE RURAL 'SOCIAL MEDIA CHAMPIONS'?**

Business owners who **are actively and successfully using innovative social media techniques** in their marketing and promotional efforts.



Champions **serve as exemplars** for other local businesses and **facilitate the diffusion of social media technologies** in their communities.

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**FOR THIS STUDY, RURAL SOCIAL MEDIA CHAMPIONS ARE DEFINED AS:**

- Among the first in their communities to use social media.
- Using at least one form of social media to promote their business.
- Social media users for at least one year.
- Considered a leader related to business social media use in their community.

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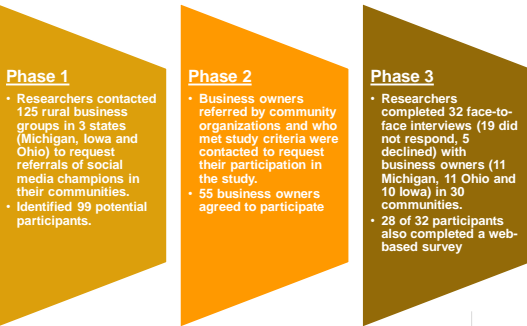
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**PARTICIPANT IDENTIFICATION AND RECRUITMENT**



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## DATA COLLECTION

Face-to-face interviews conducted April-August 2013.  
 Web-based survey captured demographics, business characteristics sent post-interview.  
 Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed.  
 Nvivo10 used to analyze data, using diffusion and adoption constructs to code data.  
 Inter-rater reliability established using Nvivo tools.

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## PARTICIPANT PROFILE: SOCIAL MEDIA USE

Businesses included agriculture, broadcasting, retail, personal services, accommodation, food, professional services.  
 Facebook used by all respondents; 57% used more than two years.  
 All participants used one or more social media tools for personal use.  
 25 of 28 participants used at least two social media tools; 21 of 28 reported using at least three tools.  
 Other social media platforms:

Pinterest	16	Blog	10
LinkedIn	11	YouTube	10
Twitter	10	Foursquare	7

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## PARTICIPANT PROFILE

		N	Percent
<b>Gender</b>	Female	21	75.0
	Male	7	25.0
<b>Age</b>	<30	1	3.6
	31-50	14	50.0
	>50	13	46.4
<b>Education</b>	High school/some college	15	53.6
	College graduate	13	46.4
<b>Years in business</b>	≤5	12	44.4
	6-10	2	7.4
	>10	14	48.2
<b>Annual Sales</b>	<\$100,000	10	40.0
	\$100,000-\$500,000	7	28.0
	>\$500,000	8	32.0
<b>Number of employees</b>	0	11	35.5
	1-5	8	25.8
	6-10	5	16.1
	>10	7	22.6

28 of 32 participants responded to profile survey

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### SOCIAL MEDIA USER PROFILE

Primary use of social media is to interact with customers; a critical element in managing customer relationships.

Secondary uses include:

- Linking with suppliers (static vs. interactive)
- Business networking
- Connecting with local businesses (co-promotions) and to share business/community information.

Twitter primarily used to find new suppliers/follow trends; not used by customers.

Other platforms (Pinterest, Foursquare, YouTube, blogs) used sparingly.

Traditional and non-traditional marketing tools needed to complement social media.

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## RESULTS

KEY FACTORS IN DIFFUSION AND ADOPTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY RURAL BUSINESS OWNERS

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### FACTORS IN DIFFUSION/ADOPTION OF SM: KNOWLEDGE

#### Developing Knowledge of SM

- Awareness of SM developed via history of personal use.
- Trial & error experimentation and online tools often used.
- Workshops, consultants, coaches, and studying SM pages of other businesses used by some.

#### Communicating Knowledge about SM

- Actively seek and share SM ideas locally (embedded in local networks & socially active).
- Actively seek and share SM ideas with professional & personal contacts outside community (embedded in external networks).
- Link SM page strategically to other entities' SM pages.

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FACTORS IN DIFFUSION/ADOPTION OF SM:

PERSUASION

Relative Advantages:

- Greater reach versus traditional marketing and communication methods.
- More cost effective (free) and can change/update more efficiently; tailor your message.
- Get much more consumer feedback than with a website.
- Flexibility; fit social media in when convenient.

Disadvantages:

- Readiness of target market for SM.
- Time consuming to monitor and manage SM.
- Pressure to be responsive and consistent in SM efforts.

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DIFFUSION/ ADOPTION OF SM:

PERSUASION

Compatibility:

- Helps busy business owners feel connected to everyday life; fits into daily routine.
- Familiarity/ carryover from personal to business life; seamless management. Fits easily with other business functions (e.g. email, data base management).
- Time consuming. Compatibility and benefit varies with SM use of clientele.

Complexity:

- Facebook easy to use and navigate at the basic levels. Finding time to figure out new SM applications was an ongoing issue for some.
- Social media perceived to be easy yet challenging at the same time; needed to seek help from others beyond the basic level of applications.

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DIFFUSION/ ADOPTION OF SM:

PERSUASION

Trialability:

- Most business owners spent time as needed to learn Facebook; realize they need to continue to invest time.
- Low barriers to entry on social media encourage small business owners to try it out.
- Pressure to keep up with new applications and responses to customers once committed to SM.

Observability:

- Using social media shows customers a business is innovative.
- Observing what other businesses are doing gives confidence to try new approaches; a non-threatening way to find out about the local market.
- Observed benefits of SM time and effort less certain.

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FACTORS FACILITATING ADOPTION OF SM

• Perceived usefulness:

- Ability to meet business goals (sales, awareness, brand management).
- Implement strategies instantaneously; feedback is immediate.
- Flexibility; messages can be adapted quickly to react to shifting trends.
- Consumes less time and money resources than other media.
- Improves response time to customers; able to connect 24/7.
- Ability to tap markets not reached by traditional media.
- Ability to connect with customers outside of region.

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FACTORS FACILITATING ADOPTION OF SM

• Ease of use:

- Familiarity with Facebook through personal use.
- Minimal training needed to use basic features.
- *Less confident about developing comprehensive SM strategies (barrier).*
- *Challenging to maneuver frequent, unexpected changes to FB features (barrier).*

• Perceived enjoyment:

- Allows users to be creative.
- Social interaction with customers.
- Communication reflects personality of the business/ owner.
- Share business owner's excitement about products with customers.

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BEST PRACTICES:  
GAINING & DIFFUSING SM KNOWLEDGE

Develop knowledge about SM by asking known users for help, experimenting, and using online help tools. Adopt a learn-as-you-go approach.

Seek SM information from sources outside local community, as well as inside. Examine SM of other businesses, competitors, vendors/suppliers, customers, and industry for ideas.

Share knowledge about SM by developing and maintaining local and non-local networks as well as personal and professional networks, actively participating in SM user-groups, and strategically cross-promoting with other businesses and local community using SM.

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**BEST PRACTICES:**  
**USING/ADOPTING SM**

- Social media is cost and time effective relative to traditional media; integrate SM with existing marketing efforts.
- Determine ways to use social media as both a marketing vehicle and as a market information source.
- Leverage immediacy of SM to create interest, excitement, awareness and drive traffic.
- Management tools (i.e.; Hootsuite, SnapRetail) can streamline social media efforts and improve connectedness across different social media platforms.
- Use analytics to determine which SM tactics are effective.
- Do not outsource SM maintenance; it will not convey as authentic and thus be less effective.

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**BEST PRACTICES:**  
**SM, ENGAGEMENT & BALANCE**

- Enhance customer experience by providing a SM vehicle for frequent interaction. Connecting on a personal level with customers is more effective than traditional advertising tactics (sales).
- Invite customers to engage with your business via SM. Recruit friends/followers to help spread your SM presence.
- Find synergies in your SM use to effectively manage your personal and business life.

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**ONGOING AND FUTURE WORK**

- Continue to develop/empirically test an explanatory model of diffusion and adoption of social media technology among small rural business owners.
- Develop multi-media case studies to profile and illustrate best practices in social media use.
- Broader implications for explaining diffusion, adoption and transfer of innovative business practices/systems in rural settings.



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## QUESTIONS

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