



Top Ten Recommendations for Oklahoma Agritourism Facebook Marketing

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Brittany Bowman
Communications Specialist

Quisto Settle
Assistant Professor

Stacy Tomas
Assistant Professor

Angel Riggs
Associate Professor

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Overview

Agritourism includes a variety of activities, such as bed-and-breakfasts, farmers markets, pumpkin patches and Christmas tree farms. There are approximately 400 registered agritourism operations in Oklahoma. In 2014, agritourism generated an economic impact of \$64 million in Oklahoma (Murphy, Melstrom, Shideler and Cummings, 2014). How do potential agritourism visitors in cities learn about these agritourism farms many miles away? Social media can be a valuable, cost-effective marketing tool. However, amid the many day-to-day tasks of an agritourism operation, Facebook marketing can sometimes feel overwhelming. Researchers at Oklahoma State University compiled data from 174 Oklahoma agritourism operations in June 2018 to identify factors influencing Facebook page popularity (Bowman et al., 2020).

Recommendations

1. **You should still have a Facebook page, even if you do not plan to post.**

What does this mean? There are many uses for a Facebook page besides simply posting. An agritourism operation can share contact information for the agritourism operation and the general public can post on the Facebook page about their experiences. Facebook pages also can make operations accessible via internet searches. This makes it especially important to monitor the Facebook page to be aware of what other users may be saying about the operation.

What data supports this? Thirty-one percent of operations did not post at all in June 2018, but 17% of these operations' pages still had the general public create posts in the "community" area of the Facebook page. While it is better to create posts instead of having a dormant page, contact information can still be listed.

2. **Understand that page likes and post reactions are two different measurements.**

What does this mean? A very small proportion of people who have liked an agritourism Facebook page interact

with its posts. Therefore, it is possible a Facebook page's audience may not view posts with important information. **What data supports this?** Facebook pages in this study had a median of 1,881 page likes. However, Facebook posts had a median of 33 likes, which is only 2% of the page likes. Encourage your visitors to post on your agritourism operation's Facebook page.

What does this mean? Tourists seek to know other tourists' candid experiences before visiting an agritourism operation. These experiences can be shared by posting onto an agritourism operation's Facebook page or by creating a review on the page. What visitors say about your agritourism business may be more important than what you say. So, encourage visitors to share their experiences or photos on your operation's page.

What data supports this? Page likes were strongly related to the number of community posts and number of reviews. When comparing the number of likes a post received, posts made by the agritourism operation and posts made by the general public were similar. While operation and public posts were similar, community posts and reviews did appear to increase overall awareness of the agritourism operation.

3. **Consider quality over quantity is important when creating Facebook posts.**

What does this mean? Just because a post is long or has a large number of pictures does not mean it will receive a large amount of public interaction.

What data supports this? Word count and the number of attachments did not have any statistical relationship to the number of reactions a post received.

4. **Create a variety of posts.**

What does this mean? There are many ways a post can appear on an agritourism operation's Facebook home page. The page administrator may write the post themselves, share a post from another page, update a profile picture or post a live video, just to name a few. Typically, agritourism operations only created one type of post. Therefore, using a variety of post types may help the operation stand out among competitors.

What data supports this? Certain types of posts, such as live videos, were infrequent among agritourism operations but had high visitor engagement when used. While there was no statistically significant relationship between variety of original posts and page likes, operations that

used different types of original posts did have noticeable differences in the types of interaction with these posts (reactions, comments and shares). This could help build the “personality” of the Facebook page to help distinguish the operation from other types of agritourism operations.

5. Use hashtags as an opportunity to increase branding efforts.

What does this mean? Hashtags do not appear to increase post interactions, but they could be used to draw attention to a post or to build overall agritourism branding. For example, a wedding venue could use #bridalbouquet for a flower arrangement instead of a generic term like #beautiful to draw future brides’ attention to a more specific topic. Agritourism operators also should consider networking with nearby agritourism operations to use a common hashtag to promote the region.

What data supports this? Only 25 pages used a hashtag in any post in June. Of those 25 pages, only nine hashtags were used by more than one page. The two most commonly shared hashtags were #oklahoma (used by four pages) and #produce (used by three pages). While these hashtags may describe agritourism, they are too generic and do not necessarily reflect terms a potential agritourism visitor may search for when planning an agritourism visit.

6. Consider creating Facebook events.

What does this mean? Creating an event on Facebook provides a place for all interaction about the event. Facebook users can mark themselves as “interested” or “going” to an event, which can cause the event to appear in their friends’ newsfeeds, boosting publicity further. Additionally, Facebook events provide one central location for posts specifically about the event, created both by the general public to build excitement and by the agritourism operator to provide updates about the event.

What data supports this? Only 23% of Oklahoma agritourism Facebook pages had an event, so creating a Facebook event could be a simple way to distinguish an agritourism operation from others. The number of event-related posts had a moderate relationship to the number of people “interested” in an event, suggesting that when operations host events, they should work to promote them.

7. Advertisements are valuable but not necessarily required.

What does this mean? Facebook allows advertising in a variety of formats. For example, a special advertisement can be developed, or a post can simply be “boosted” to receive more views after it has already been created. Advertisements were associated with more overall page likes, but it is important to note the nature of this research is very generalized about advertisements.

What data supports this? Pages with an advertisement had a median of 2,732 overall page likes, compared to pages without advertisements, which had a median of 1,219 overall page likes.

8. Find a balance in overall page activity.

What does this mean? Posting more frequently is associated with a moderate increase in the number of

overall page likes and overall page activity. However, in the mantra of “work smarter, not harder,” increasing posting frequency should be done carefully and is not a perfect cure for acquiring more page likes. Instead, the number of posts made by the general public was more strongly related to overall page likes than the number of posts made by the agritourism operator.

What data supports this? The total number of posts created by the agritourism operation was moderately related to overall page likes. However, the number of posts made by the agritourism operation was more strongly related to overall page likes.

9. Provide links and content from your other social media accounts and websites.

What does this mean? Using a variety of social media platforms, such as Instagram, YouTube and Pinterest, can help an agritourism operation reach a diverse audience. Additionally, e-mail and websites are important. While the majority of pages listed e-mail and websites, very few listed links to other social media accounts. It is possible agritourism operations have additional social media accounts, but are not using their Facebook pages to bring attention to these pages.

What data supports this? Only 5% of pages listed other social media platforms on their Facebook page. Seven pages listed Instagram, two listed Pinterest and one listed YouTube. Websites were listed on 82% of Facebook pages and e-mail was listed on 68% of Facebook pages.

Conclusions

These recommendations are intended to suggest creative ways to improve your Facebook page, but are not in any way comprehensive. Facebook analytics change frequently, and it is important to remain current on Facebook marketing practices. Continue to monitor audience interest and feedback on your Facebook page and identify characteristics that make your agritourism operation unique.

Furthermore, while Facebook is important, it should not be the only component of an agritourism operation’s marketing. Consider incorporating other social media platforms into your marketing campaigns, such as Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube and Twitter. Then, be sure to list the links to these pages on your Facebook page. Websites, newsletters, radio spots, advertisements and mailings can be helpful, too. Consider how to integrate these different forms of communication. For example, include your agritourism operation’s logo as well as a link to your Facebook page on all communications material.

References

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